

TULSI SAHIB
SAINT OF HATHRAS

Mystics of the East Series

TULSI SAHIB SAINT OF HATHRAS

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and
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**RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS
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PREFACE

This is the second in a series of short treatises on the lives and teachings of Saints. It is primarily being written to introduce them to English-speaking people. It aims at making them familiar with the essence of the Saints' teachings without burdening them with too many details about their lives.

The Saints, or perfect Masters as I should prefer to call them, hold a unique position in the world. Not only do they achieve the highest purpose of life, namely union with God, by going through a course of intense meditation, but, in the teeth of opposition from orthodox religion and at the risk of their lives, they also burden themselves with the duty of instructing sincere seekers how they too can attain God-realization. And they accept nothing in return for their labor of love. Thus, they are the greatest benefactors of mankind.

The teachings of the Saints and their code of ethics and morality are the results, not of any philosophical reasoning, but are based on their spiritual experiences. Consequently, of necessity, while their approach may be different, the teachings of all Saints are identical in character. A thread of underlying unity runs through all their teachings. Nevertheless, their writings, mostly poetical, by virtue of the circumstances of their lives, the different languages used by them and the literary devices employed, lend a

personal flavor which can best be enjoyed in the original.

This book on Tulsi Sahib of Hathras, whose voluntary renunciation of the princely heritage and adoption of a life devoted to spiritual pursuits lends a romantic interest to his life story, contains some of his best known poems ably translated by Professor Janak Raj Puri, assisted by Mrs. Chandravati Rajwade and Mr. Virendra Kumar Sethi. Our thanks are due to Mrs. Marilyn P. Durrant and Mr. Barry Berman for typing the manuscript during their visit to this Colony, and to Miss Louise Hilger who, as usual, has assiduously done the work of going through the manuscript, reading the proofs and seeing the book through the press.

Radha Soami Satsang Beas
May 1978

S. L. SONDHI
Secretary

LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF TULSI SAHIB

Authentic facts about the lives of Saints are rarely available, and Tulsi Sahib is no exception. Details about his early life are even more obscure. Though he lived as recently as the 19th century, not even his original name and parentage are definitely known. However, our primary concern in this monograph is the teachings of the Saint as given in his poetry, rather than the details of his lifestory. The main versions on which the present account is based are briefly discussed below.

According to a biographical note given in the introduction of Tulsi Sahib's *Ratan Sagar* (1909), he came from a good Brahmin family. In early boyhood he developed an aversion to worldly life, renounced everything and became a recluse. Eventually, he settled in Hathras. This version makes no mention of his original name, the names of his parents or the place of his birth.

In the biographical note given in the beginning of Tulsi Sahib's *Ghat Ramayan* (1911), it is stated that he was born in 1763 A.D., and expired at the age of 80, in 1843 A.D. He was the eldest son of the King¹ of Poona. He was Brahmin by caste and his

¹The word "King" has been used for Peshwa. The Peshwas, to begin with, were the chief administrative officers of the Kings of Shiwaji's Empire. In course of time they became all-powerful and virtual sovereigns of the state. They made Poona their headquarters while the Kings remained titular heads and stayed in the town of Satara.

name was Shyam Rao. Against his own wishes, he was married by his father at an early age to a girl called Lakshmi Bai. He had one son through this marriage. His father, a spiritually inclined man, wanted to renounce his throne in favor of his son in order to spend the rest of his life in devotion. Shyam Rao, himself averse to worldly pursuits, ran away from the palace the day before the date fixed for his coronation. All search proving futile, his younger brother was made the King.

Shyam Rao kept wandering in forests, mountains, towns and cities for many years and ultimately came to Hathras, where he settled for the rest of his life. Here he came to be known as Tulsi Sahib.

Most of the modern scholars who have written about Tulsi Sahib in their studies on mysticism and mystic literature, including Kshitimohan Sen, Ram Kumar Varma, P. D. Barathval and Parashuram Chaturvedi, have based their accounts on one or the other of the two sources given above.¹

The recent research on the records of the Peshwa descendents, conducted by Shri Vitthal R. Thakar, a prominent historian of Maharashtra, in most part confirms that Tulsi Sahib was a kinsman of the Peshwas. Although his research is not yet complete, Shri Thakar maintains that there are reasonable grounds to suppose that Tulsi Sahib was none other than Amrit Rao, the grandson (on the daughter's side) of Peshwa Bajirao I. Peshwa Bajirao II was Amrit

¹No attempt has been made by the editors of Belvedere Press to reconcile these two versions, which they continue to print side by side in subsequent editions of *Ghat Ramayan* and *Ratan Sagar*.

Rao's brother by adoption. From early life Amrit Rao was sober, thoughtful and straightforward. Political intrigues repulsed him. Disgusted with the affairs at the Peshwa's court, he left Poona for Banaras in 1804 and took up a life of spiritual pursuits. He settled at Hathras in 1808-9 where he remained till the end of his life in 1843. It is, however, not clear as to how and when he came to be known as Tulsi Sahib.

From a study of the aforementioned versions it will be found that there are important points which could be accepted as sufficiently reliable. Stated briefly, they are as follows:

Tulsi Sahib had noble ancestry, and he belonged to the royal lineage of the Peshwas.

He was born in the latter half of the 18th century.

He had an inclination to renounce the world for attaining spiritual realization.

He fled from his native place and may have kept himself in disguise to escape recognition. It is possible that he might have adopted the name "Shyam Rao" to remain incognito.

He traveled extensively and ultimately settled at Hathras in the Aligarh District of U.P.

He came from the south, and was popularly known as *Dakhani Baba*, which means "Sage from the South."

No information is available as to when Tulsi Sahib met a Master. Nor is it known whether he was initiated into the path of the Sound Current (Surat

Shabd Yoga) while he was still a prince, or later, when leaving everything, he adopted an itinerant life.

He does not give the name of his Master in his writings. However, a Marathi scholar in one of his articles observes that Tulsi Sahib "was initiated by a guru in the town of Hathras, and under the instructions of his guru he did intense meditation."¹

All Saints, in all ages, have laid great stress on the necessity of a living Master to attain the Lord. In Sant Mat, a Master is not only incumbent upon a disciple, but is also indispensable throughout the spiritual journey.

Tulsi Sahib repeatedly stresses the need for a Master in his works. In no uncertain terms, he says:

Without the guidance of a perfect Master, no one can ever get release from bondage, be he a god, man or sage. Even the trinity, the gods of creation, preservation and destruction, cannot help. Until the insect comes under the shelter of the mason-wasp,² he cannot be transformed into a mason-wasp. Likewise, without a Master, man will ever remain drifting in the dreadful ocean of the world.³

That he had a Master, is reflected in many of the writings of Tulsi Sahib. Expressing his gratitude to his Master, he says:

¹Pt Pandurang Sharma, in the June 1931 issue of *Trivithi Gran Vistai* (a Marathi magazine devoted to cultural studies), p 202

²It is a belief in Indian folklore that the masonwasp catches a worm and keeps hovering and humming over it. In course of time the worm, in the company of the masonwasp, itself turns into a masonwasp. The Indian mystics have adopted this lore to explain the transformation that the satsang or the company of a Saint brings about.

³Tulsi Sahib, *Ratan Sagai*, p 7. Allahabad: Belvedere Press, n.d.

O Tulsi, the kind and merciful Master has blessed
me and made my life blossom.
He has given me a new life.¹

Again, in a beautiful simile, he describes the transformation wrought in him:

I was base iron, heavily laden with rust.
With the touch of my Master, the philosopher's
stone, I came to be called gold ²

Gradually, Tulsi Sahib attracted a large number of followers and disciples from among the high caste Brahmins as well as the low caste Sudras. They came from the poor classes, as also from the affluent. He used to visit other towns and cities in U.P. Among his disciples were Seth Dilwali Singh of Agra, his wife Mahamaya, his mother, his mother-in-law and sister. They were all keen disciples of Tulsi Sahib, who used to pay visits to them in Agra, stay in their home in Panni Gali, and hold satsangs³ there.

On one of his visits to Agra, in October 1817, Tulsi Sahib happened to reach Seth Dilwali Singh's house when precious silk garments embroidered with gold and silver lace, expensive shawls and woolens had been laid out in the sun on the terrace.⁴ Tulsi Sahib, whose feet were smeared with the mud and sludge of the street, due to the previous day's rain, went up to the terrace. Seeing the Master, the

¹ Tulsi Sahib, *Ghat Ramayan* Pt I, p 8 Allahabad Bellevedere Press, 1973

² Ibid , Pt II, p 191 Allahabad Bellevedere Press, 1973

³ Discourses

⁴ It used to be a practice in Northern India to spread precious silk and woolen garments in the sun for a short while during the months of September and October, to protect them from insects

mother of Seth Dilwali Singh and the other ladies were overjoyed. They bowed at his feet and the mother begged him to be seated on the clothes. Tulsi Sahib walked over them with muddy feet and sat down. The ladies of the household, lost in love and devotion for their Master, did not mind at all; in fact they were delighted. Tulsi Sahib said, "Oh, I am sorry, I have spoiled your precious garments." At this Seth Dilwali Singh's mother humbly replied, "No, Sahibji,¹ nothing has been spoiled. Rather, you have blessed us with your *darshan*.² Everything belongs to you; what is ours in them?" Seeing her devotion, Tulsi Sahib said, "I am very pleased with you. Ask for anything and I shall be happy to give it."

At this, Seth Dilwali Singh's mother replied, "I have everything through your grace and need nothing. But," pointing to her daughter-in-law, she submitted, "Mahamaya wants something." Mahamaya, the wife of Seth Dilwali Singh, had no son. Tulsi Sahib, in the same vein of compassion and kindness said, "Yes, she will have a son. But do not look upon the child as a mere human being."

In August 1818, Seth Dilwali Singh and Mahamaya were blessed with a son, who was given the name Shivdayal Singh and who later came to be known as Swami Ji Maharaj, the renowned Saint.

Thus, Swami Ji Maharaj was close to Tulsi Sahib from early childhood and continued to have

¹The devotees of Tulsi Sahib used to call him "Sahib" or "Sahibji."

²Vision, sight or interview, especially looking at a holy person with devotion

the privilege and benefit of his *darshan* and satsang to the last day of Tulsi Sahib's sojourn on this earth. Swami Ji, who got light and guidance from Tulsi Sahib, had great love and respect for his Master. Like all other disciples, Swami Ji used to call him "Sahib" or "Sahibji."

Near the end of Tulsi Sahib's life his vital force or soul was so much drawn up to the spiritual realms above that his lower limbs remained numb and he could not walk. He used to be carried on the shoulders of one of his disciples. Once Tulsi Sahib, in the company of Swami Ji, went to a fair. While the crowd was dispersing, they stood on one side of the road and Tulsi Sahib, in a moment full of compassion and grace, said to Swami Ji that whoever came and bowed in respect, his or her soul would at once be taken into subtle spiritual regions. Although Tulsi Sahib was ready to grant this boon, there was hardly anyone to receive it.

Out of thousands of people going from the fair and passing that way, only one person, a prostitute, cared to stop and pay her respects to the Saint. Tulsi Sahib asked Swami Ji to place his hand on her head. At this Swami Ji remarked that whereas the boon was being given by the former, the hand of the latter was being used to carry it out. Tulsi Sahib replied that later he (Swami Ji) too would have to do the same work. In short, by the blessings and grace of the two Saints the woman's "inner eye" was immediately opened, she had celestial visions and her soul ascended to subtle transcendent planes. After a while, when her soul returned to the body, she bowed in gratitude and took her leave.

Tulsi Sahib's association with Swami Ji was one of great love, while Swami Ji deeply loved and respected him as his spiritual guide. When Tulsi Sahib's end was near, he sent for Swami Ji, whom he used to call "Munshi Ji."¹ When Swami Ji received the message, and learned that Tulsi Sahib was leaving the world, he got up as he was, without even putting on his shoes, and ran towards Hathras. It is said that he had to cover a distance of about twenty miles in order to have a last glimpse of his beloved Master. Tulsi Sahib did not depart from this world until Swami Ji had arrived and been blessed with a last penetrating look.

Tulsi Sahib, though born in a Brahmin family and brought up in high caste traditions, is strongly critical of all forms of external worship, rituals and observances. He writes: "Visits to holy places are of no avail. Worship of water and stone accomplishes nothing."² He denounces the orthodox and priestly class thus: "They worship stones, they chant prayers and they sound bells, they simulate devotion to lure people."³

This open and bold attack on ritualism annoyed some people. Once Tulsi Sahib was returning from the house of a devotee. Some orthodox people and priests collected a group of street urchins. They all followed Tulsi Sahib, shouting abuses and throwing

¹A term applied to a man of letters. Tulsi Sahib had given this as a pet name to Swami Ji, who was 55 years younger than he. At the time of Tulsi Sahib's death, Swami Ji was 25.

²*Shabdavali* Pt. I, p. 24. Allahabad: Belvedere Press, 1966.

³*Ibid.*, p. 17.

stones at him. One stone fell very close to Tulsi Sahib and enraged a disciple. Fuming with anger he turned towards the crowd and started to remonstrate. Tulsi Sahib immediately forbade him to say anything. He explained to the disciple that the people of the world have always been harsh and cruel to devotees of the Lord. They have gone so far as to flay them alive and cut off their heads on the scaffold. But the lovers of the Lord, far from showing any resentment, never uttered a single harsh word. "It does not behoove you," he said, "to get angry at such a minor event as the shouting of abuses or the throwing of stones"¹

Tulsi Sahib was humble, loving and tolerant. Forthright in the expression of his views, he was kind and gentle in his behavior. Scholars, pundits and priests often came to argue with him. Sometimes they came intent on fighting and used harsh words. But Tulsi Sahib always got up to receive them, bowed to them and thanked them for gracing his cottage. He gave them an elevated seat and listened to their vituperations with patience. In *Ghat Ramayan* there are numerous instances of how he won the hearts of his opponents with his humility, and his loving and kind demeanor.

Tulsi Sahib was highly appreciative of love and devotion. Once he went to Agra and visited Swami Ji at Panni Gali.² Hearing that their Master was in town, some women who lived in the vicinity rushed for his *darshan*. Most of them were engaged in

¹In this context, refer to the poem entitled, "Persecution of Saints "

²The name of the street in which Swami Ji lived

household work and hurried to Swami Ji's house in whatever condition they were in. On arriving they gathered around Tulsi Sahib and bowed to him with great devotion. A disciple of Tulsi Sahib, noting their unclean clothes emitting a strong odor, asked them to get up and sit at a distance, as their clothes were stinking with perspiration. Tulsi Sahib stopped him, saying, "Please let them remain sitting. You have no idea of the fragrance of their love. You don't know with what devotion they have come. You smell a bad odor coming from them; I don't."

Sheikh Taqi, a Muslim divine, while returning from his pilgrimage to Ka'aba, happened to pitch his tent near Tulsi Sahib's hut. This gave him an opportunity to meet and talk to the Saint. Tulsi Sahib, in his dissertation on God-realization, explained to the divine that the human body is the real mosque, in which "Khuda" or God resides. He does not live in artificial mosques of brick and mortar made by man. The way to meet Him is also within the body, through the third eye. The eye center holds the entire mystery of Creation. The *Kun*, the Word, or the Sound Current is the key to the Lord's mansion and it can be attained only through a perfect Master.¹

The effect of Tulsi Sahib's discourse on Sheikh Taqi was not immediately discernible. The seed, however, had been sown, and within a few days it sprouted. For after a few days the Sheikh returned to Tulsi Sahib and begged him for initiation with tears of devotion in his eyes.²

¹See the three poems on pp 84-88

²*Ghat Ramayan* Pt II, p 112

Managiri, the head of a group of ascetics, was a learned scholar of the Vedas and other scriptures. To him Tulsi Sahib points out that the essential teachings of Sant Mat are beyond the reach of the Vedas and Puranas. "They know not the mystery of the Path. Sant Mat is different and higher."¹ "The ascetics try to give up the world, but this act itself brings them back to the ocean of the world. Putting on saffron-colored, yellow or blue robes, giving up food or eating from the hands,² taking vows of silence, are all external observances and are of no avail. They do not lead the soul to realization of the Lord."³ Managiri was eventually initiated by Tulsi Sahib and given the blessing of such inner experience as changed his entire life.⁴

The followers of Kabir, in the course of time, had drifted away from the path of Shabd Yoga as taught by the Saint, and entangled themselves in external rites and rituals. Phooldas, a Kabir Panthi *Mahant* (priest) also came to Tulsi Sahib to explain the path of Kabir to him. However, in the process he himself got enlightened. After a long and detailed explanation of Kabir's path, Tulsi Sahib concludes:

The method of Sant Mat is always one and the same
People have, in the course of history, given it different
names and have thereby created confusion .
All those who have reached the highest and merged
into the Supreme Being give the same message

¹Ibid , Pt 1, p 166

²There is a group of ascetics who always use their hands in place of a cup or bowl for eating and drinking purposes

³*Ghat Ramayan* Pt 1, p 166

⁴Ibid , p 167

Those who have gone within and realized the Lord, narrate the same truth. Whatever the earlier Saints have said, the same Kabir has taught.¹ Kabir has told us of the five immortal melodies, he has told us of their five stages. You have taken the external timbal to produce that music.²

After being convinced of the truth of Tulsi Sahib's interpretation, Phooldas asked for initiation, saying, "I have now realized that thyself and Kabir are, indeed, one. Being a high priest, pride had rendered me blind. This lowly one could not recognize thy greatness, O Master."³ After being initiated, he returned to his monastery in a spirit of elation. He handed over the priesthood, along with the entire property, to Revtidas, one of his close disciples. Revtidas, however, pondered over the fact of his Master's renunciation and concluded that the high priest must have secured something higher to have given up the comfort and the dignity associated with his high status. He, in turn, passed on the priesthood to another disciple and left for Tulsi Sahib's cottage.

To Gunwan, who used to worship various incarnations and was a devout admirer of scriptures, Tulsi Sahib revealed that even the incarnations, gods and goddesses are within the bounds of the law of karma. The scriptures promise salvation after death; they do not speak of salvation while living. Salvation is of value if it is attained now, while living. Those who

¹Ibid, Pt 1 p 180

²Ibid, p 184

³Ibid, p 181

give assurance of salvation only after death are cheats and charlatans. Who has come after death to give evidence that he has attained deliverance? The true path is that which gives salvation in this life, and while living. The incarnations come to destroy the evil-doers, not the evil in them. The Saints, ever loving and merciful, come to emancipate sinners, not to kill them.¹

Tulsi Sahib emphasized the importance of controlling worldly desires in order to attain salvation. Desires lead to actions, which in turn become the cause of our transmigration. For every one of our births is the result of our past actions. In order to escape the cycle of birth and death, one has to break through the chain of karmas. Tulsi Sahib says,

Wherever your desires are, there you will go. Your desires determine your actions. These actions make you wander from birth to birth. Whatever you sow, its fruit you will eat.²

Breaking forever the chain of birth and rebirth can be achieved only in the human form. The human form is the only outlet in the prisonhouse of transmigration. Human birth, therefore, is an extremely rare privilege, which must not be wasted at any cost.

Tulsi Sahib describes it as “a rare chance given by the Lord, a boat provided by Him for crossing the ocean of phenomena.”³

¹Ibid Pt II, dialogue with Gunwan, pp 42-46

²*Ratan Sagar*, p 90

³*Shabdavali* Pt II, p 92 Allahabad Bellevedere Press, 1972

Tulsi Sahib, like Kabir, Nanak and other Saints, stresses the necessity of withdrawing consciousness from the "nine portals" of the body and bringing it to the "tenth door" or the eye center. He has variously described the eye center as "a poppy seed containing a city"; as "the eye of a needle through which thousands of camels can pass"; as "a mole, behind which lie hidden lofty mountains"; and as "a telescope which reveals many a world." In the same context he continues, "He who enjoys this journey through the 'seed' is an adept intoxicated with divine love. . . Without the grace and company of such a one, all effort to enter this door proves futile."¹

This process the Saints have described as "dying while living." Tulsi Sahib says, "He alone can reach the abode of the inaccessible Beloved, who dies while living and again lives after such a death. He drinks divine nectar to his fill."²

In his dialogue with Priyelal Gosain, Tulsi Sahib discloses:

The Lord who has created the universe, the regions material and spiritual, Himself resides within the human body. He is apart from Pind, And and Brahmand,³ and yet He is close to man and is ever present within him. His knowledge can be obtained from Saints alone, for they give the key to the soul, which enables it to go within and realize Him. . .⁴ But you, a human being, the top of creation, consisting of five elements, stoop to worshipping stones

¹*Ratan Sagar*, pp 173-175

²*Shabdavali* Pt II, p 12

³The physical, the astral and the causal planes, respectively

⁴*Ghat Ramayan* Pt II, pp 63-64

that consist of only one element. You adore idols as being pure and holy, but scoff at the so-called low caste humans as impure and profane, who, like you, are perfectly sentient and rational. You bathe with great ostentation in "holy" rivers, but do not see the accumulated dirt on your own mind.¹

Priyela Gosain, after a long discussion with Tulsī Sahib, was convinced. He discarded his saffron gown, necklace of beads and the sacred thread, and asked for the gift of Nam. Tulsī Sahib picked up the robe and wrapped it round Priyela's shoulders, put the necklace and sacred thread around the monk's neck and said that robes and attire have no relevance to the path of God-realization. These are external formalities; the true path lies within. Neither the adoption nor the discarding of robes is of any significance.²

Tulsī Sahib vigorously denounced all distinctions of caste and color. Worldly people, limited in their vision and outlook, bring down the noble teachings of Saints to their own low level. In his well-known work, *Ghat Ramayan*, he says:

Saints reveal the way of attaching soul to Shabd and of meeting the Lord. People reduce their lofty teachings to the level of narrow distinctions of caste and color. Those who give the true teachings of Sant Mat are looked upon by most people as slanderers of holy scriptures, for they do not try to comprehend the truth of Sant Mat. They pay no heed to the Saints' words of profound wisdom. How can

¹Ibid, p 66

²Ibid, p 86

such people ever get freedom from bondage in this manner? They get all the more involved in the snares of illusion.¹

Gradually, Tulsi Sahib acquired the reputation of being a great Saint, in various cities of U.P. At the same time, some persons tried to slander him and dissuade people from going to him. They started describing him as a magician, who made people forget themselves. They said, "Never go near him. Do not pay respect to him. Beware of him, for he casts a magic spell."²

A Nanak Panthi (follower of the cult of Nanak), called Palakram, also came to Tulsi Sahib. Truthful, honest and humble, he regularly read the *Japji* and *Sukhmani* (compositions from the Adı Granth). However, he knew nothing of the path of Shabd, which Nanak and other Saints had taught. In the course of his talks with him, Tulsi Sahib said that Nanak was also a Saint of the highest order, having come from the abode of the ineffable Shabd, the home of the Lord. He imparted the same truth that the other Saints have given. In *Japji* and many other hymns, Nanak sings the praises of Saints and of the Nam that they give. On reading the Adı Granth one finds the importance of a living Master stressed at every step. Nanak also sings praises of the fourth realm, beyond the reach of Brahm and Parbrahm and beyond destruction. He gives the method of joining *surat* (soul) with the Shabd within, of crossing the astral and the causal regions, and of merging

¹Ibid , p 99

²Ibid , p 104

in Sat Purush (the Supreme Lord) in Sach Khand.¹

Tulsi Sahib, elaborating further, explains to Palakram that the soul, in the course of its inner journey, bathes in Amritsar (the lake of divine nectar) after crossing the second spiritual region, and becomes immortal. Other Saints have called that lake Mansarovar.

That pool of nectar within is perceived only with the help of a Master.² Whenever Saints and Mystics refer to "Amritsar," they always refer to the pool of holy water within. The outside water, however pure it may be, can wash the body but cannot wash away our sins.

Speaking on vegetarianism, Tulsi Sahib tells Palakram:

All Saints have extolled the qualities of kindness and mercy. Even the infliction of a minute injury on any living being has been described by them as an act of cruelty. In Sant Mat all Masters have decried killing and meat-eating. Read the Adī Granth carefully; the Gurus have not approved of killing and eating meat anywhere. . . . Nanak Sahib was kind and compassionate. He did not permit the killing of animals.³

The teachings of all Saints are essentially the same. They speak of the "kingdom of heaven" which is within. They show the path and impart instructions to attain it. They do not claim to teach some-

¹Ibid, Dialogue with Palakram

²Ibid, pp 137 and 141

³Ibid, pp 147-153

thing new or different from what other Saints have taught. But, after their departure from the world, their followers, in the course of time, reduce their teachings to mere formalism, to a husk without its kernel.

By the time Tulsi Sahib came to this world, the followers of earlier Saints had come to be known as "Kabir Panthi," "Dadu Panthi," "Paltu Panthi," "Dariya Panthi"; that is, belonging to the cult of Kabir, cult of Dadu, cult of Paltu, and so on.

Tulsi Sahib declared that he was giving the same teachings as those of Kabir, Nanak, Dadu and other Saints. In support of this in his *Ghat Ramayan* he has quoted extensively the poems of Kabir, Ravidas, Dadu and other Saints. Tulsi Sahib, for the first time, used the expression "Sant Mat" or "the teachings of Saints" to stress the basic unity of the teachings of all Saints.

Swami Ji later adopted the same expression, "Sant Mat," in his works. The two Saints thus brought the teachings of all Saints under this comprehensive designation.

Tulsi Sahib's works consist of *Shabdavalī*, *Ratan Sagar*, *Ghat Ramayan* and a small unfinished book called *Padma Sagar*. *Shabdavalī* is a collection of miscellaneous compositions set to different *ragas* (scales) of Indian classical music,¹ and deals with various aspects of Sant Mat. *Ghat Ramayan* and *Ratan Sagar* have been written in the form of

¹It is characteristic of all Indian classical poetry that it can be sung or chanted, and the tune is often given by naming the scale

dialogues with disciples and seekers. *Ghat Ramayan* deals with the various religious doctrines prevalent at that time, and explains their meaning in the light of Sant Mat. *Ratan Sagar* deals with the mystery of creation, heaven and hell, Kal or the Negative Power, karmas, mind and death. It also sings the glory of perfect Saints and extols the value of their company and satsang. Lastly, it explains how Saints take care of the soul of the disciple when it leaves the body.

Tulsi Sahib's works include words and expressions of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, the last being the court language of the time in most of the royal courts in the South. These languages, along with Marathi, must have constituted a part of his education. But, besides these, he has freely used words of Braj, Avadhi, Rajasthani (Marwari), Gujrati, Punjabi and Maithili, which leads one to conclude that, like many other Saints, he must have traveled widely in U.P., Rajasthan, Gujrat, Punjab and Bihar. But his permanent abode was a hut in the small village of Jogia, situated on the outskirts of Hathras. He lived here until he passed away in 1843 at the age of 80.

Tulsi Sahib's poetry is direct and simple, though profound in meaning. Poetry, for him, is a vehicle for thought; poetic embellishments are only secondary. Yet his poems are tuneful and melodious. Some of them are based on the rural folk tunes of his time. His compositions on love and longing for the Lord are rich in emotional content, while those dealing with spiritual attainment are full of exuberance and ecstasy. His frank and forthright approach and

his firm rejection of all forms of ritualism are mel-
lowed by his extreme humility and all-embracing
love.

SELECTED POEMS
OF
TULSI SAHIB

IN GRATITUDE

This is an excerpt from Tulsi Sahib's *Ghat Ramayan*, in praise of his Master. In a prayerful mood, he pays homage to his Satguru for bestowing knowledge and bliss on him, for giving him inner vision and for granting him deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. It was through complete surrender to his Master that he attained these boons. Indeed, even the power to surrender himself came through the grace of his Master.

Partham bandon Satguru swami

At the outset, I offer salutation to my Lord,
the Satguru;
In surrender at his feet, Tulsi loses himself
in ecstasy.

I pay homage in all humility at the feet of
my Master,
Whose grace has revealed the mystery of
Light and Sound.¹

¹*Nirat* and *surat* are words used by Saints for the faculty of seeing the Light within, and the faculty of hearing the Sound, respectively

I offer myself in adoration to the Saints,
Who have bestowed on my soul the power
to see.

The brilliant light of surrender has revealed
unto me
The essence and the true form of my Master.

Lowly and bereft of wisdom, I offered my
heart to him;
Through surrender, recognition of Satguru
has come to me.

The Satguru, indeed, is an unfathomable
ocean of bliss,
He has revealed the Path and the method
to attain the Lord.

Again and again, I bow at the lotus feet
of my Master;
In all humility I sing praises of him.

Perceiving my state of misery he took pity
and gave me inner vision,
Repeatedly, I clasp his feet in surrender and
pray unto him.

With love of thy feet I dedicate myself as
thy slave,
For, knowing me as the worst of sinners,
thou still sought me out.

With all my heart and soul, forever I am
thy slave;
Except the Saints, O Satguru, none can
fathom thee

O merciful Master, full of joy is thy
blessing;
By surrendering to thee, helpless sinners are
ferried across.

The Sant Satguru is my very life and being,
The lowly Tulsi has taken refuge in him.

My life and destiny are in thy hands,
Without thee none can find the Path.

Thou art all Knowledge, the sole object of
my worship,
One with the Infinite and the Beyond art
thou, O Master.

Satguru is the true Lord, imperishable and
supreme;
Seeing my miserable state, he cut asunder
the noose of Death.

He has given me shelter at his lotus feet
within,
He has made my soul his own humble
slave.

He has turned my *surat* and *nirat* unto
himself;
With loving devotion, I surrender myself
at his feet.

Again and again, I offer myself to my
Satguru,
Who, in his mercy, has overlooked Tulsi's
sins.

Tulsi, the slave, pays homage to all living
beings;
That they are all equal, is the truth he has
realized.

Pray, have mercy on thy slave, O Beloved,
Make him accept all misfortunes.

I bow humbly at the feet of everyone and
say:
In the Beloved's company lies the meaning
of love.

I am thine, but fail to sing adequate praises
of thee;
Repeatedly, in adoration, I bow my head
at thy feet.

With true devotion again I salute my Master,
With whose grace I have perceived the
Imperceptible.

The Satguru is beyond comprehension,
without form or shape;
It is Saints alone who know his power and
stature.

How can I ever describe the greatness of my
Master?

He has given my soul the key to the
Inaccessible.

The vision of the Invisible has enchanted my
soul,
Through the grace of the Saints I have
recognized the Master.

Piercing the granite wall,¹ my soul enjoys
bliss divine;
Intoxicated with joy, I dwell forever at his
lotus feet.

The indigent Tulsī knows naught else,
In the thought of his Master, he remains
absorbed.

My Master has given to me knowledge of
the self;
Time and again my soul ascends to celestial
regions.

Traversing the regions within, I beheld the
Cosmos;²
The beginning and the end of Time stand
revealed to me.

The beginning and the end of creation that
he sees within,
Verily, of that experience does Tulsī give a
description.

¹Opening the third eye and going within

²Brahmand—the entire physical, astral and causal worlds

The Universe is contained within the human
frame,
Tulsi has himself seen what to others is
beyond reach.

Not only the macrocosm within the
microcosm did I behold,
But, piercing the veil, I also perceived the
One pervading all.

Within the body, Tulsi has seen the Invisible
Being;
Knowing the unfathomable One, he narrates
the wondrous tale.

The Universe is contained within the human
body,
Tulsi has revealed this truth to all seekers.

Within my own body have I seen the
universe;
In the light of the lotus feet of my Master,
I have bathed in the true Prayag.¹

Only a rare one, who has known the
Primordial, will bear me out;
One who has tasted the Divine Nectar
within,
Will alone know the effulgence of the
Supreme Lord.

(Ghat Ramayan Pt I, p 8)

¹Confluence of the three rivers—Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati. Here Tulsi Sahib is referring to an inner region which the Saints have described as Triveni or Prayag

GLIMPSE OF THE INVISIBLE

This poem seems to be a description of the commencement of the spiritual journey within. The account starts from where the soul current gets collected in the center behind the two eyes.

Aeree dragan par damke daminee

Lightning flashed in my eye, O friend,
And brightly did shine the light of the moon.
I got a glimpse of the Invisible within,
And thirst and longing for the Lord were
aroused.

My ears received the boon of Unstruck
Music,
And Knowledge came like the explosion
of light, O friend.

Dark clouds began to scatter and the sight
Of the Divine Mansion was revealed
unto me.

Beyond the sun, the moon and the tunnel,¹
Tulsī beheld the abode of the Lord Almighty.

(*Shabdavalī Pt II, Holī Mārfat I, p 36*)

¹The crooked tunnel, called Bunk Nal, located between the first and second inner stages, through which the soul passes in its spiritual journey

TRUTH LIES WITHIN

Tulsi Sahib says that the learned and the scholarly stress the importance of studying scriptures for realizing Truth. The pseudo-religious emphasize pilgrimages, fasting and other ritualistic practices. God lies within, says Tulsi, and there alone can He be realized. This truth is known only to the Saints.

Tan mein tat mool samānā

Within the body lies the essence which the
Vedas and the Puranas are seeking.
Within this body exists the entire Universe,
so the sagacious Saints say.
Recluses, ascetics and monks are searching
for Him in variegated garbs.
Rishis,¹ munis² and avdhoots³ lay stress on
scriptures and holy books.

¹Sages of ancient India

²Hermits.

³A class of ascetics

The learned of the world, puffed up with
pride in their scholarly traditions, remain
deluded by their erudition.

They delude the world through the practice
of pilgrimage, fasting and charity;
They glorify bathing in holy waters and their
followers bear the evil consequences.
They get lost in rituals and external
observances and never can reach
the destination.

Such is the state of people in this world
Who keep revolving in the cycle of
eighty-four ¹
Only the Saints have attained the Ultimate,
O Tulsī;
They obtain liberation who realize this truth.
The pedantic are engrossed in the practice
of traditions,
And evermore, in their ego, are they enslaved
by delusion.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Holi* 3, p 21)

¹The cycle of incarnation in eighty-four lac (8,400,000) species

HUMAN FORM

It is a rare privilege to be endowed with the human form, for which even gods and angels pine. Pious deeds may lead to an abode in heaven. But heaven does not give eternal bliss. It is only a short respite from pain and suffering. After the merit of the individual's good actions is exhausted, he may be thrown into the fires of hell or given birth in the lower species. It is only in the human form, emphasizes Tulsi Sahib, that deliverance from the cycle of birth and death can be obtained.

Yeh tan durlabh dev ko

Rare is the human form even for gods,
thus declare all sages from the housetops.
Declare all sages from the housetops:
Even gods will not obtain the human form.

For such a heaven do the foolish aspire,
whence gods get thrown into hell when
earned merit ends.¹

Lured into the performance of pious deeds,
people have still to wander from species
to species.²

He who has perceived the Essence within his
body and mind

Looks down with contempt, O Tulsi, on the
pleasures of paradise.

Rare, indeed, is the human form even for
the gods, thus declare all sages from the
housetops.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Kundli* 13, p.37)

¹Abode in heaven is given to a soul on the basis of its meritorious deeds in the human birth

²Literally, four *khami* (categories of creatures) *andaḥ* (born from eggs), *jeraḥ* (enwrapped in sheath), *śwedaḥ* (born from change of season) and *udbhūḥ* (born from within the earth)

SATSANG

This is an excerpt from *Ratan Sagar* in the form of a dialogue. Hirdey, a disciple, raises certain questions concerning satsang;¹ namely, what are the benefits of satsang? Why do some people not derive any advantage from the company of Saints? What are the obstacles that come in the way of acquiring true Knowledge? Tulsi Sahib elaborately answers all these questions, using various similes and metaphors

1. *He soamī as as koi kahīya*

Hirdey

O Master, people attended many a satsang,
But some say they gained no benefit.
Countless days did they spend in the company
of Saints;
Never did they see the Lord with their own
eyes.
Much praise have you showered on satsang,
But it brought no advantage to them.
This has aroused doubts in my mind,
Pray, help me to be rid of them, O Master.
What did they lack? Why did they not
understand?
How did they not recognize the jewel of
Knowledge?

¹Literally, true association, usually denotes the company and discourses of a perfect Master

Tulsi Sahib:

Listen, O brother, I shall try to explain the
truth to you.

The soul left her Home on the day of
Creation;

Birth after birth she gathered the rust of
karmas.

As rust eats into iron, as worms eat into
wood,

As a sharp sword becomes blunt through
corrosion,

As hail gets lost in water, so has the soul
lost its luster.

The terrible law of karma is formidable; the
mind rides the soul;

Servile to the senses, the mind roams
recklessly.

Mind and soul have been firmly knotted
together.

The unclean mind has lost discernment and
understanding.

Tell me, how can it ever know what
satsang is?

He who is illiterate and ignorant,
and tries to read a book,

What effect can its meaning have,
when he knows not the alphabet?

It is thus that they remain in the company
of Saints;

They keep their minds engrossed in food and
greed.

So long as their minds relish such pleasures,
They continue to remain in the association
of Saints;

Never do they understand the Saints' way
and technique.

How then can they ever hope to perceive
the Truth?

Who eat to their heart's fill, who sleep for
long hours,

Who indulge in idle gossip, who control not
the wayward mind,

Their minds, from countless births, are like
tangled yarns.

Who can ever disentangle such twisted yarn?
Such a one should work hard, or surrender
to the Master.

Either he should do spiritual practice
or seek his Master's shelter.

If he does neither,
he wanders without a purpose.

Fickle of mind and speech, how can he
achieve his aim?

Were he to enkindle within the love of his
Master's feet,

He would gain true benefit from his mentor.

He who begs from the Saints with sincerity
of heart

Receives their compassion and is redeemed.

To recognize Saints is not an easy task;

He deals with them through cunning and
deceit.

One who tries to know them from their
actions
Will fail to know them even if he spends
many lifetimes.
Their ways and methods are inscrutable
and deep:
How can a naive observer know their
greatness?
The Vedas describe them, "Not this, not
this."
Even the prophets cannot unravel their
mystery;
The three gods¹ cannot know their stature.
From external signs you cannot assess them.
Whosoever claims to know what Saints are,
Tulsi, in consternation, puts his hands to
his ears.²
Rare are the noble and benign of good
fortune
Whose attention is fixed on the feet of the
Saints.
They can truly judge these lovers of the
Beyond,
Who take the world and its forms to be
illusory.
There are men who live at the level of
beasts;
What can these slaves of Satan know of
Saints!

¹Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the Hindu trinity of the creator, the preserver and the destroyer

²An Indian mode of expression conveying surprise and incredulity

O Hirdey, I cannot tell how crooked such
people are.

Were I to attempt to describe their evil
doings,

There would not be enough paper and
ink.

Never aware of their true selves, they ever
remain in delusion.

They waste their lives in base pursuits and
return empty-handed.

O Hirdey, they lived not truly in the company
of Saints,

They plunged not deep and drank not its
nectar.

When water is poured over a stone, its
wetness quickly dries;

Since no moisture penetrates it, what can
it do except remain dry?

When sugar is put into water, it dissolves
and gives sweetness,

The two become one, and water becomes
sweet in the company of sugar.

The sweetness gets absorbed, O brother, and
water turns into syrup.

No one calls it water or sugar any longer;

It has now acquired the name of syrup

Likewise, one who gets absorbed in satsang
shall not have to suffer from delusion

(Ratan Sagat, pp 23-25 and 123)

The following poem brings out the same thought. Worldly people—scholars, pundits and ritualists—all extol the value of satsang, and call their respective gatherings ‘satsang’. But satsang is association with the true, with enlightened and realized souls; it is the company of a perfect Master. Tulsi Sahib says that even in the company of Saints, worldly people fail to gain true benefit, for their attention is fully turned towards the world, its objects and pleasures.

2. *Satsang satsang sab kahen*

‘Satsang, satsang’ say all, the scholar,
the ritualist and the world at large;
The scholar, the ritualist and indeed
the whole world know not its true
significance.

To whom shall we speak of it?
Engulfed as they are in the gratification
of sensual pleasures,
How can they ever partake of true satsang?
Son and wife are but a dream, an empty show;
They keep you company for a while, as a kite
whose colors fade.

For the sake of your palate, O Tulsi, you took
not the shelter of your Master,
Though ‘satsang, satsang’ say all, the scholar,
the ritualist and the world at large.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Kundli* 10, p 36)

THE MASTER'S PHILANTHROPY

Tulsi Sahib enumerates here the gifts that the Master bestows on his disciple. Not only does he guide the disciple in his daily conduct; he also gives him inestimable help in the spiritual journey within.

Are dekh nihaari bichaar karau

Oh think thou deeply and deliberate;
Without the guidance of a Master
The way cannot ever be found.
He will dye thee in satsang's color,
Take thy soul to regions celestial,
And reveal the firmament within.
If thou desirest to revel
In realms spiritual within thine own self,
None will help thee except the Saints.
In a short moment wilt thou depart,
And thy body be reduced to dust.
Thy Master alone, O Tulsi, will show
The entrance back to thy Home.

(Shabdavali Pt I, p 47)

CYCLE OF KARMA

The cycle of human actions is unending. How a man acts determines the mental make-up of his next incarnation. That, in turn, leads to further actions. And so the cycle goes on. The only way to break through this vicious circle is to seek the guidance of a Master and, according to his instructions, obtain deliverance.

1. Karm pradhān buddhi upjāi

The mental make-up of man emanates from his karmas.

He remains involved in performing actions good and bad.

According to the nature of the actions he performs,

He is put into the bondage of various species.

In accordance with the trade that a merchant practises,

He carries loss and profit, pain and pleasure along with him.

He who conducts his trade under the sway
of desires,
Drifts with the currents of the ocean of
eighty-four;
He moves from species to species according
to his actions.
This snare is manifestly spread in the entire
creation.
He is born, he dies, and again he takes a
new frame;
As he sows, so does he reap the fruit of
his actions.
In the cycle of eighty-four, he remains in
slumber;
And in the human form, only a rare one
awakens.
Through a Master's teachings he realizes
God,
Just as collyrium placed in his eyes
restores his vision.
Without a Master's teachings to guide
them, even gods, men and sages
do not get release;
When Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh get
not deliverance, what can we say
about ordinary creatures?

(Ratan Sagar, p 7)

2. *Are tan bhang bhanwar man*

O thou ever-wandering mind, thou bumble-
bee, break the shackles of thy body;
For age after age thou hast been dyed in the
fast colors of this world.

Even as the juggler makes a monkey dance
with the strings in his hands,
So does the karma-juggler make our mind
dance to his tune.

It wanders for aeons and aeons in the bondage
of the body;

In pursuit of sense pleasures it roams, as does
a kite without a string.

The ruthless and tyrannical Kal, without the
mercy of the Master,

Is subdued not, so formidable is his power.

For countless lives the mind has been under
the sway of passions;

From moment to moment it has been a
captive of the wave of cravings.

The pursuit of desire makes one take abode in
the body;

The endless chain of karmas throws him into
the cycle of birth and death.

O Tulsi, in the company of thy Master become
a swan,

And in the crystal water of Mansarovar attain
salvation.

(*Shabdavali* Pt. II, *Kamod* 1, p 113)

WORLD IS EPHEMERAL

There is nothing lasting in this world. All is a passing show.

1. *Dekho drishti pasari*

Look all around, there is nothing
of consequence in the world.
This short-lived pageant will be left behind.
Pelf and property, kith and kin will be
of no avail.
Indeed, O Tulsi, life is as fleeting as the
existence of the moth in the flame.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Kakahra* 17, p 26)

2. *Sab jag jātā re jātā*

The whole world is going, it is ever on
the move,
But none sends any news, any information.
They leave from here, they bring no news;
From there no one ever comes back.

All the world is moving towards death,
But none solves the mystery of the end.
Blindly the world on the path of rituals
flounders,
The pundits prescribe specific garbs and rites,
But they disclose not the path of salvation.

Be thy deeds pious or evil, they will not give
thee human birth;
When the soul leaves the body and the mortal
frame decays,
It goes into the cycle of eighty-four.
In the form of donkeys, dogs, swine and the like,
It is crushed and chewed in the jaws of Kal.
Ceaselessly revolves the individual in the whirl-
pool of transmigration;
Never does he find peace and calm.

For the sake of his father and mother, brother
and son,
He carries a heavy load on his head;
When the angel of death takes his life from
within his body,
At that crucial time there is none to keep him
company.
The cruel messenger of death tortures his body,
He beats and kicks him without compassion.
When he cared not for the deeds he committed,
What use are regrets and repentance now?
He takes life in the world to be worthless,
And he listens not to the counsel of the wise.
Leave this vain debate, O Tulsi, for death
is at hand;
False are all family relations who entangle thee!

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Chitavani* 35, p 132)

3. Dekhā jagat pasār lār

I have seen the whole wide world, O brother,
There is nothing that goes with us at death.

All men run after wealth to obtain it,
But not a pittance accompanies them
When life departs from their bodies.
Indeed, O Tulsi, blind is this world
Which values not the company of Saints.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Arill* 18, p 32)

4. *Jam bar jabar karāl chāl koe lakhai na bhāi*

The couriers of death are ruthless and formidable;
No stratagem can work against them,

O brother.

When they tie the hands of their victims,
Who but the Saints can save them?
Even the deities have been laid flat by the stroke
of death;

Indeed, O Tulsi, Ram and Krishna, nay the ten
incarnations,
Have not been spared by it.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Arill* 19, p 32)

5. *Sant saran jo pare tāhi kā lagā thikānā*

Who take refuge of Saints, gain their destination;
The rest are in anguish, whom death masticates.

Kal fears Saints and lays his head at their feet,
Indeed, O Tulsi, without the Saints there is no
anchor to give protection.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Arill* 21, p 32)

ROLE OF THE MASTER

Without the help of a spiritual guide, man would continue to stumble in ignorance. The mystery of the Universe can be unravelled only through a living Master.

Chale jāt nar bhool

Man continues to stumble in ignorance and thus goes on suffering from the shaft of pain.

He is bereft of the company of the holy; who but the Saint can put him on the Path?

If he were to meet the benevolent Satguru, the primordial mystery would be unravelled.

Indeed, O Tulsī, the Master would wipe off the stores of karma and drive the Angel of Death away.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Kakahra* 6, p 25)

WAKE THOU, LOST IN SLUMBER

A warning is here given against the lethargy of man in working for his salvation. Life is fleeting, death is fast approaching and yet time is being wasted.

1. *Bhor koi jāgo re jāgo*

It is dawn, wake, oh wake thou, drowned
in sleep so deep.

Dark clouds are gathering, a storm is
brewing,

The watchman yells, "The night is over."

Those who have awakened are now rid of
their fever;

Who still are lying asleep, their house is
being burgled.

The five¹ and the twenty-five² have made thy
house their abode,

They know no mercy, devoid of compassion
are they.

"Mine and thine" are violently pushing thee
to and fro;

Against them thou art completely helpless
and weak.

¹The five passions

²The 25 *prakritis*, comprising five manifestations of each of the five elements

The three guards¹ at thy door are themselves
demanding;
They hold in their hands the rope of
deceitfulness;
They never stop those who come and go;
They do not listen to any of thine entreaties.
Leave, oh leave this habitation once and for
all, O Tulsi;
The sheriff² here is but a puppet and the
ruler³ is blind.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Shabd* 6, p 3)

2. *Jag jag kahate jug bhae*

“Wake up, wake up!” has been said for ages,
but not once did he awake;
Not once did he awake, how shall he ever find
the essence?
For ages and ages he has slept; who but
the Saints can wake him?
He has fallen into the net of delusion; who can
release him from this bondage?
Whosoever talks wisely to him, he listens not
a whit.
Through the ritualism of the pundit, the whole
world has been deluded.
“Wake up, wake up!” has been said for ages,
but not once did he awake.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Kundhī* 9, p 36)

¹The three attributes

²Mind

³Kal, the Negative Power

3. *He musāfir jāgo*

Wake, O traveler, wherefore dost thou sleep?
The night has already ended.
Whosoever sleeps, loses all; whosoever wakes,
is blessed with great good fortune.
One who has forgotten the Master and the
secret of his primal home,
He struts about in the world, unfortunate that
he is
Worldly attachments hold him fast in their grip;
what evil days are in store for him!
Know thou the essence of human birth and
lose not this golden opportunity;
Break all thy shackles and get deliverance
from the ceaseless cycle of birth and death.
Swim across this turbulent ocean, O Tulsī:
Be thou a swan, leave the filth of the crow!

(*Shabdavalī* Pt II, *Bīhag* I, p 94)

CONCENTRATION OF THE SOUL

Fear of death can be conquered through concentration of the soul at the eye center. Ultimately this leads to union with the Lord.

Jin jin surat sanwar

Whosoever has concentrated his soul has
been redeemed from the fear of Death.
She¹ has ascended the firmament with force,
and has found refuge at the feet of the
Lord.

She has taken abode in the infinite region
and has attained union with the Beloved.
Indeed, O Tulsī, she has been delivered from
delusion, suffering and fever of countless
lives.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Kakahra* 8, p 25)

¹The soul

FUTILITY OF RITUALS

The Lord is beyond matter and form and so external observances cannot lead to God-realization; He can be realized only within the human body.

Nahī roop nahī rekh

The Lord has neither form nor shape, and
yet the ritualist wanders about in search
of Him;

He roams in all the four holy places,¹ but
his object remains unfulfilled

He reaps no reward from stones and gains
no benefit from water.

Indeed, the Lord resides within the house,
O Tulsi, but there he seeks Him not.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt. 1, *Kakahra* 5, p 24)

¹Jagannath Puri in the east, Badrinath in the north, Dwarka in the west and Rameshwaram in the extreme south are the four important places of pilgrimage situated in the four corners of India

MASTER THE MARINER

In this poem the world is compared to a dreadful ocean, which can be crossed only through the help of the Master.

Bhav jal agam athah

Beyond comprehension is the ocean of
phenomena, unfathomable and boundless.
Satguru, the Master Mariner, alone can ferry
thee across to thy Home.

The world is a veritable whirlpool, wherein
creatures have been entrapped by Maya.¹
Indeed, humanity, under the sway of avarice
and attachments, O Tulsi, is going
through the cycle of birth and death.

(*Shabdavah Pt I, Aril 17, p 32*)

¹Illusion

THE VAIN PURSUIT

People indulge in worldly activities and pursue worldly ends, or else they repeat the name of the Lord as a mere ritual. They will never realize Truth, nor attain salvation.

Lōbh lōg pachī mare

People toil in pursuit of worldly desires;
who cares for the search of Truth?

They relish the pleasures of their senses
and revel in their passions.

Parrot-like they repeat the name of the
Lord as a mere ritual.

They attain not salvation while living,
O Tulsī, but babble about attaining
liberation after death.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Kakahra* 26, p 28)

FALSE DISTINCTIONS

To distinguish people as high or low by birth is erroneous, for God has created and pervades all.

Neech ūnch nahi dekh

Look not on people as high and low; know
that the One has created them all.

There is no Brahmin, no Sudra, no Kshatri;
they are not apart.

Nor has the Vaisha a different caste; the
One pervades all.

Indeed, who considers them as separate,
O Tulsi, has wasted his precious life.

(Shabdavali Pt I, Kakahra 14, p.26)

THE SECTARIANS

This poem is written in denunciation of the sectarian approach to religion and of the practices of the priests and the ritualists. They generally resort to external observances to gratify their ego.

Dagar sant k̄a panth

How can the sectarian ever know the path
of the Masters and where it leads to?
Deluded are the priests and the ritualists,
burning in the fire of the world.
They have put the load of pilgrimages, rituals
and external observances on themselves.
Indeed, they resort to all these practices,
O Tulsi, to gratify their ego.

(*Shabdavali* Pt 1, *Kakahra* 12, p.26)

MASTER SHOWS THE PATH

The riddle of the Universe is solved by the Master. It is through him that the Inaccessible can be attained.

Itna bhed abhed

The insoluble mystery is solved by the
Master alone;

He shows the path to the Inaccessible and
the way to hit the target.

The soul crosses the Ocean and beholds the
Primeval Lord:

Indeed, O Tulsi, it merges into Him, even
as a stream is lost in the ocean.

(*Shabdavali* Pt. I, *Kakahra* 31, p.28)

REVERSE THY GAIT

It is by withdrawing our attention from the world that we can attain our True Home. It enables us to discover our true self and regain the lost treasure.

Ulati chalaē darbār

Reverse thy gait from the court of this
world and attain thy True Home.
The drop will merge in the Ocean, and thou
thyself will know the wonder.
The lost treasure will be found and thy true
self will be revealed.
He who has solved this riddle, O Tulsī, is
indeed a true Saint.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt. I, *Kakahra* 32, p 28)

ENTER THE TEMPLE WITHIN

This poem impresses upon the seeker to break the shackles of this world of phenomena by entering the temple of his body under the guidance of a Master, attaining bliss everlasting.

Āli ree Kāl karat behālī

Kal¹ hath put the world in distress,
O friend,
Go thou beyond his realm to reach
thy True Home
Hold in thy hands the lamp filled with
elements² as the oil
And with remembrance as the wick,
to show thee the way.

¹The Negative Power

²Five elements earth, water fire, air and ether

Let the fire of Brahm¹ be ignited within thy
body
And illumine the palace with radiant light.
Take the key from the Master, open the
lock and enter the temple.
By the name "Kind and Merciful" is He
known;
Ever and anon, He forgives us our sins.
Enter within thy self and there behold the
Invisible Beloved;
And cherish thou and ever foster thy love
for Him.
With knowledge, discrimination and contem-
plation
Let the bonds of Kal be severed.
Reach thou the banks of the lake,² O Tulsi,
There take a holy dip and wash away thy
karmas.
Pure is the love of that immaculate Lord,
Seeing whom the soul is filled with bliss.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Gouri* 5, p 118)

¹Lord of the second spiritual region

²Lake Mansarovar in the region of Par Brahm, where the soul becomes free of all karmas

SALVATION DURING LIFE

People in general, and the priests in particular, speak of the state of salvation after death, on the basis of scriptures. Tulsi Sahib points out that these people have no right to make such assertions. Only those who have experienced salvation during their lifetime, namely, who have gone through the process of dying while living, are competent to make such claims.

Jiwat kartab sabhi batāve

In this life the concept of salvation all
describe;

To meet the Lord by dying while living,
none discloses.

They all speak of the goal of salvation after
death;

How to attain it while living, no one says.

Were they to reveal the method of attaining
release while living,

Then alone would Tulsi be convinced of
their words.

While living, no one crosses the bourn to
the other side;

After death no one returns to this side to
tell the truth.
How have the scriptures made assertions
without experience?
They know not of the state of the one
who has died.
Not a bit do they speak of the other side;
Yet on this side, they teach us how to attain
salvation.
One who sees not is called blind by the
world;
Still people seek truth from priests and
study scriptures.
All their accounts are mere hollow conjec-
tures;
They dole out falsehood, not by seeing,
but by reading.
One who has seen, his evidence I accept as
true;
He who speaks without seeing, speaks but
untruth.
After death no one returns,
nor does he send any letters.
Without experience, who imparts
the method, goes to hell.
Who speak, after seeing with their own eyes,
And teach the method of salvation during
life,
Are of the stage and stature of Saints,
For they reveal the quintessence of the soul.

(*Ghat Ramayan* Pt II, pp 70 and 108)

MAYA

Tulsi Sahib has described the snare of ignorance, which Maya (Illusion) has spread in the world. Even sages and ascetics have not been able to escape her allurements. Her power extends right up to the region of Universal Mind. Only those fortunate few escape the net who take the refuge of a living Master.

Nar se nīksī ik nārī

From man emanated a woman, whose guiles
only a Saint comprehends.
She hath neither hands nor feet, neither
head nor body, and she hath devoured
the whole world.

Neither mother nor father hath she; of her-
self she is born, and hath brought misery
to her husband.

She is neither young nor old, but ever in
bloom, albeit without a body is she.
All are oblivious of her wiles, while she
hath enslaved the world.

She neither cometh nor goeth, neither taketh
birth nor dieth; for aeons she remaineth
formidable.

Rishis¹ and munis² were ruined by her lure;
the whole world moans in distress.

She tore apart the sun, the moon and the
planets, and swallowed them all.³

The mobile and the static she hath made her
morsel, and spread her web in the entire
Universe.

Who took the benign protection of the
Master, were fortunate to awake and
escape her;

Who were able to recognize her could alone
triumph over her and cross the Ocean.

Sayeth Tulsī, throwing away her snare, I fled
And attained liberation through association
with Saints.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Holi* 7, p 23)

¹Sages of ancient India

²Hermits

³Esoterically, the whole universe is under the sway of Maya

BEYOND THE PERISHABLE

This poem is a description of the spiritual region, which is beyond change and destruction. No element of the ephemeral material world is to be found there.

Pyārī Satguru ne deenḥa bhed

The Master hath revealed to me the secret,
 dear friend,
Of a region where exist neither Sunn,¹ nor
 breath, nor the Vedas;
Neither the five elements, nor mind, nor body
 are there;
Nor is there the mortal frame, nor karmas,
 nor suffering;
There is no birth in that region, nor is there
 any death;
There exist no bondage, no fetters, no
 chains.

¹Void

The soul hath penetrated into the peak,
O friend,
And pierced, like a shaft, a hole in the sky.
Therein she beheld sights wondrous, beyond
comprehension.
Even as the cannonball blasts the gate of a
citadel,
So did the soul burst the tower gate of the
fortress.
She got linked to the Lord as pearls to a
thread.
She went zooming¹ through the lane of the
firmament,
O friend, with joy and bliss filling her
heart.
She was bestowed the boon of realizing Him,
O Tulsī,
In a realm without trees, seeds or creation.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Tappa* 28, p 11)

¹Here Tulsī Sahib denotes unhindered speed of the soul

EAT NOT FLESH

In the following two poems, Tulsi Sahib strongly denounces meat-eating. He explains to Palak Ram, an inquirer from amongst the followers of Nanak, that one who kills a living being or eats its flesh will have to suffer the tortures of hell and will continue to revolve in the cycle of birth and death under the law of karma.

1. Palak Rām tum sunīyo swāmī

Listen to me Palak Ram, my esteemed
friend,
They verily fall into the dungeon of hell
Who slaughter living beings and eat their
flesh;
Who kills a goat, suffers the consequences.

They do this to seek the pleasure of the
palate,
And cause life from the living to be
extinguished.
For the sake of sensual gratification they buy
sin,
And get their abode in the fires of hell.

Never will they get release from this
bondage,
Even if the cosmos were to turn turtle.
Be they hermits, recluses, householders
or others,
None will escape the tortures of hell.

Whoever has eaten flesh and fish in this life
Is bound in captivity by the butcher, Kal.
Nothing good will come out of such
conduct,
Take this as evidence from the writings
of Saints.
Nanak and Kabir have given the same
message,
Dadu and Dariya have sung the same song.

(*Ghat Ramayan* Pt II, pp 148 and 152)

2. Dekho nar kī bhool sool

Look at the folly of man, for which he suffers
much pain:
He kills a living being, he deprives it of its right
to live,
He cuts a goat and offers it to propitiate
the goddess,
The ignorant fool knows not the wages of
his sin.

Others' offspring he kills and feels no com-
passion,
How shall he be well, suffering anguish life
after life?
He eats the flesh of beasts, he puts them to an
untimely death;
Such a man will take on the form of a ghost, life
after life.
Tulsi declares from the housetops: Kill not
the living;
Within all resides the beloved Lord—listen,
O men and women!

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Mangal* 5, p 89)

ACQUISITION AND RENUNCIATION

The world follows the path either of acquisition or renunciation. What a man renounces, he gets in the next life because of suppressed desires. True renunciation lies in freedom from bondage to the physical desires. In acquisition he gets entangled in the mire of this world. Tulsi Sahib says that the path of Saints is different from both; for them, both the paths are deluding.

Tyāgan sangrah sant na jānā

Saints know not renunciation,
nor acquisition.

The two throw the mind into the web
of delusion.

What one renounces, he gets in the next
life;

Again and again he comes to the world
for gratification.

In acquisition the entire world is enslaved.
In these two the world remains entangled.
Sant Mat¹ is quite distinct from both.
Renunciation and acquisition are for it
delusion.

Saints show the path of Sound and Light,
They still the mind and raise it to skies
within.

The soul gets concentrated at the door² and
is in bliss;

Ascending the celestial skies she is in sight
of Gagan.³

The fortunate soul sets out on its journey
along with the Divine Melody;

Listening to this Celestial Music day by day,
she becomes detached.

(*Ghat Ramayan* Pt II, p.86)

¹Teachings of the Saints

²The tenth door or the third eye

³The sky of the second stage

BLESSINGS OF SATSANG

Satsang or the company of a Saint transforms man and enables him to get rid of delusion. Eventually it leads him back to his Original Home.

Toi liyā satsang

My contact with satsang has dyed me in
the hue of my Master.

The delusion of countless ages has been
dissolved, and I have reached my Original
Home.

Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu and the Vedas can
find no access to the place where
I dwell;

Indeed, O Tulsī, my formless dwelling
is beyond the reach of even the
Lord of the three worlds.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt. I, *Kakahra* 10, p.25)

THE SWAN AND THE CROW

The soul, before it was born in this world, was in its eternal Home with the Lord in its pristine glory. After being born, it became impure in the company of the mind and senses. Here Tulsī Sahib has called the soul in its pure state, a swan (hansa), and in the fallen condition, a crow. Allegorically, one of the abilities of the swan is to separate water from milk, and drink only the milk. Likewise, when the soul relishes spiritual bliss and rejects the carnal desires of the world, it becomes pure.

Hansan kā ik des

In the land of the swans, a female
 swan gave birth to an offspring.
The offspring was doubtless a swan, but
 he took to the language of crows.
If he could but separate water from milk,
 he would regain the excellence of the
 swan;
Indeed, Tulsī pays homage to him who
 has attained perfection in this art.

(*Shabdavali* Pt. I, *Arill* 1, p 29)

THE WILES OF MIND

This is another excerpt from a dialogue in *Ratan Sagar*. Hirdey, a disciple of Tulsī Sahib, enumerates the various wiles to which the mind resorts in order to delude man. Even sages and hermits could not escape its onslaught. He requests Tulsī Sahib to enlighten him as to how Saints have been able to tame their mind. Tulsī Sahib answers that the only way to do so is to attach it to Shabd or the Divine Melody within.

Hirdey binay bachan kar bolā

Hirdey:

With all humility I submit to you, O Master,
The wiles of mind are beyond limit and
measure.

Moment after moment waves arise in the
mind,

Even as the surface of the ocean cease-
lessly undulates.

A snake bites and there rises the wave
of its venom;
Likewise the deadly poison of mind makes
one senseless.
Whosoever claims he has conquered his
mind,
Never for a moment shall I believe his
assertion;
Be the claimant learned, accomplished
or ascetic,
I shall never put credence in what he
says.
The mind's game is like the acrobatics
of a rope-dancer.
It captures its victims by putting shackles
on their feet.
As a dream is nothing more than an empty
show,
So does the mind revel in raising false
hopes.

It remains under the sway of senses, and
takes not the refuge of the Master.
Many a ritualistic stance did one take,
but never could he bring the mind
under control.

How have the Saints been able to subdue
the mind?
Hirdey entreats you to kindly enlighten him,
O Master.

Tulsi Sahib:

The appetite of mind exceeds that of a
demon,

And desire makes it dance to her tune.

Whosoever takes shelter at the Master's feet,¹

His attention gets firmly fixed in them.

I shall now tell you the saving quality
of the Saints' feet:

Listen, O Hirdey, I shall reveal this secret
to you.

The luminous feet lie at the junction of
black and white.²

O Hirdey, I shall show you the way to
reach them.

The soul takes abode at the lotus feet
of Saints,

She fixes to them her gaze, and stays on
in them.

A mansion has courtyards and staterooms,

But the chamber meant for repose is apart.

Those who fix attention there uninterruptedly,

Become free from the bondage of mind
and desire.

Water which freezes and turns into a ball,

Melts again and reverts to the state of
water.

¹The term 'feet of the Master' or 'feet of the Satguru' is a form of expression in India, which actually means 'in his presence' The Master's real presence is in the eye center of the disciple By reference to the 'feet' here is not meant the physical feet, but the radiance of the feet of the astral form, or the radiant form of the Master, inside

²The reference is to the two-petalled lotus within, where the radiant form of the Master manifests itself

Even as water becomes ice and again
turns to water,
So does the mind melt by contemplating
the Master's feet.
Listen, O Hirdey, mind is the cause of all
sorrow.
Thus alone do you remove the poison of
mind:
Attach yourself to the feet of the Master.
No other remedy will ever tame the mind.
Many a device has been employed without
avail;
No one was ever able to make his mind
still.
Not a single artifice can subdue the mind,
Except when the soul gets attached to the
Divine Melody.
Sages and hermits, all have danced to Mind's
tune;
He alone has been saved who took the shelter
of Saints.

(*Ratan Sagar*, pp 8 and 9)

RITUALISTS KNOW NOT THE LORD

The Lord is within the human body, but the priests and the ritualists seek Him in the world outside. They keep fasts and travel extensively on pilgrimages. All their efforts are doomed to failure. What is worse, themselves engulfed in ignorance, they talk of ultimate knowledge and claim to show the path of salvation to others. They have identified the Supreme Lord with Brahm, a lower entity. The Lord of the Saints, Satpurush, is quite different and comes from Anamī, the Nameless One.

Pundit gyāni bhekh yeh adekh gati na lakhi

The priest, the learned and the ritualist
Have not experienced the Inaccessible,
Nor have the Hindus or the Muslims seen
Him;
The Saints alone have realized the Lord
within.

All describe Him in a state of delusion,
No one has known Him within his body
In the body, Saints alone have perceived
Him;
What is beyond perception, I now describe.

Ganga, Jamuna and Triveni, the confluence
of the three rivers,
As also countless universes are within the
human frame.
Earth, water, air, fire and ether,
Within the body are all the elements five;
And I proclaim, that all may know,
Within the microcosm exists the macrocosm.

The stars, the sun, and the moon,
Nay, multitudes of such creations,
Are contained within the body.
Priests worship stones and water,
And indulge in external observances;
They themselves are in delusion,
But talk of things esoteric.

Fasts and pilgrimages in all directions
Are acts motivated by selfish ends.
They roam endlessly to East and West,
But find not the path leading to the Lord.

The Anami¹ has been realized by Saints
alone;
They have called Satpurush,² 'Sat
Nam'.³

From Sat Nam has emanated Brahm,⁴
This mystery is revealed by the Saints.

¹The Nameless, the Absolute, the Lord of the highest spiritual region

²True Lord. He presides over Satlok, the fifth spiritual region

³Literally, True Name, another name given by the Saints to
Satpurush

⁴Lord of the second spiritual region

Not knowing the reality, people have thus
described Brahm:
The one without attributes, formless and
infinite;
Also, the dispenser of justice and free from
delusion.
These qualities the ignorant attribute to
Brahm,
And him the world worships with all
devotion.

The ten incarnations come from Brahm,
The world looks upon him as Nirgun.¹
He, in turn, has created the worlds physical
and astral,
With seven islands and nine divisions of the
world.²
Thus the world hails Brahm as the Supreme
Lord,
It recognizes not the path leading to the
Ultimate.

Time and again, I have shown the way to
attain this Truth,
But none in the world had the sense to
comprehend it.

¹One beyond the three 'gunas' or attributes, the Lord of the third spiritual region Here Tulsī Sahib says that people take Brahm to be the Supreme Father and attribute to him the qualities of the Lords of the third, fourth and fifth spiritual regions, while in fact he is only the Lord of the second region who rules over the physical, astral and causal regions, which are all subject to dissolution and grand dissolution

²It is believed in Hindu mythology that the physical world consists of seven islands and nine divisions

I unravelled the mystery of the Saints' path;
No one, however, puts credence in my
words—

The preachers of Kashi,¹ the learned, the
ritualists,

As also the yogis, the Paramhansas² and the
celibate—

None of them, says Tulsi, knows the Secret.
They all are deluded in futile practices.

(Ghat Ramayan Pt. I, p.72)

¹Another name of Benaras, a city in Uttar Pradesh once regarded as the seat of learning

²An ascetic who is said to have attained a high degree of spiritual realization

SOUND CELESTIAL

The first poem is written in praise of Shabd or Divine Melody. It describes the powerful reverberation of Shabd in all spiritual regions, and how it is the source of all bliss. It manifests itself in the inner regions not only as sound, but also as light. Both light and sound guide the traveler on his spiritual journey. The second poem encourages the disciple to make the final effort and attain realization.

1. Garjat gagan girā dhun bāni

Listen, O friend, to the thunderous roar
of Shabd,
Which reverberates throughout the
firmament.
Water, which becomes turbid by relishing
earth,
Gets cleansed of its impurities when filtered.
Waves of pure bliss emanate from the heart,
When the moss that covers it is removed.

Hold the arrow, be still, stretch the bow
taut,
Fix your aim sharp at the target, pierce the
firmament.
The invisible world is contained within the
human eye,
So say and describe all men of inner
knowledge.
Behold Brahmand¹ within, through your
astral eye;
When that eye is opened, everything stands
revealed.

The soul in Sunn² will hear resounding peals
of Sound,
She will uncover and know the essence of
Shabd.

They alone, O Tulsi, will know that perfect
state,
Who have seen and experienced it
themselves.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Sorath* 15, p 99)

¹Literally, the egg of Brahm, the entire physical, astral and causal regions

²The third spiritual region, which is beyond the precincts of Brahm

2. *Surat shabd cheenhe binā*

Without realizing the soul and the
Word, all this is a vain show;
All this is a vain show till the soul soars
above and abides in Sahaj.
Cleanse your mirror with the ash of Shabd,¹
says the Master, this wise:
Be in the company of the true, and gain thou
the target of thy soul.
Go, make thy abode in the palace, and know
thine own home.
With vigor, make the final effort, O Tulsi,
and attain union with the Lord,
For without realizing the soul and
the Word, all else is a vain show.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Kundlī* 19, p.39)

¹ Mirrors used to be cleaned with ash in earlier times

NAM

Nam is the Name of the Lord. It cannot be spoken, written or read. It is the Word or Logos of the Bible and the Sound Current or Divine Melody of the Saints.

In this poem, the meaning, the value and the status of Nam is conveyed. Even prophets, ascetics and the learned are not aware of the true nature of Nam, for they did not go beyond the third spiritual region, while true Nam can be experienced only in the region beyond. Only Saints reach this level and they alone know what Nam is.

Nām vohi Nām vohi

Nam is that, Nam is that, which only he
knoweth who hath realized it.

“Even Ram¹ cannot sing its praises.”² To
Saints alone it stands revealed.

¹The hero at *Ramayana* and incarnation of Vishnu, the god of preservation in the Hindu religion

²Quotation from *Ramayana* (known as *Ramcharit Manas*) by Goswami Tulsidas Balkand, chaupai 8 of doha 31

“Nam is higher than Brahm¹ and Ram,”²
 thus sayeth the Ramayana to the
 world.
 The fourteen realms³ are within the
 dominion of Kāl,⁴
 The essence of Nam lies in the fourth
 division.⁵
 One obtaineth it from the true Master
 alone,
 Who discloseth it at the point of the inner
 eye.
 When the soul ascendeth to the region of
 Daswan Dwar,⁶
 Beyond that she realizeth the true status of
 Nam.
 Sayeth Tulsi, it is through the Master
 of the highest region
 That the separated ray getteth absorbed in
 the sun.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt II, *Kānrā* 2, p.103)

¹Lord of the second spiritual region

²Another quotation from *Ramayana*, Balkand, doha 29

³Hindu mythology has divided the astral region into fourteen realms

⁴The Negative Power

⁵The Saints have divided the entire universe into four main divisions

(a) Pind, the physical and material universe, (b) And, the astral region, (c) Brahmand, the causal region, (d) Sach Khand, the highest region of pure spirit, presided over by Sat Purush, the Supreme Father

⁶The third stage in the journey of the soul, this is beyond the reach of mind, individual and universal

IT MATTERS NOT.

In this and the next poem, Tulsī Sahib has laid down the salient principles and modes of action that are necessary for attaining spiritual realization. One who does not follow them in life, his coming to the world is futile.

1. Jinke hirdae gur sant nahin

In whose heart the Master does not reside,
It matters not if he takes the human form
or takes not.

Whose understanding is not pure and poised,
It matters not if he talks of knowledge
or talks not

Who, for selfish ends, is under the sway of
karma¹ and Kal,
It matters not if he lives in this world
or lives not

¹Law of action

Who does not know the way and the joy of
 attaining the Ultimate,
 It matters not if he gives discourses
 or gives not.
 Who has not drunk of the well-ground
 intoxicant of Nam,
 It matters not if he takes other intoxicants
 or takes not.
 Who is inflated with pelf, power and caste¹
 in this world,
 It matters not if he bows before others
 or bows not.
 Who does not recognize a Saint in this
 life, O Tulsi,
 It matters not if he offers his body, mind
 and wealth or offers not.

(*Shabdavali* Pt 1, *Shabd* 3, p.2)

2. *Tan pāe tat nā lakhā*

You got the human body, but realized not
 its essence, nor tasted the ambrosia
 given by the Guru.
 You tasted not the ambrosia given by the
 Guru; how will you ever reach the shore
 beyond?
 You have been sold to the angels of death;
 In the cycle of eighty-four you will ceaselessly
 revolve,

¹High caste

Age after age you will wander in delusion
and suffer a grievous defeat at the hands
of Kal.

Such is the slumber of the world, that it never
comes out of its delusion;

Without the grace of the Saint-Master, O Tulsi,
you will never get release from your
karmas.

You got the human body, but realized not its
essence, nor tasted the ambrosia given
by the Guru

(Shabdavali Pt 1, Kundli 14, p 37)

THE BLACK BULL

Tulsi Sahib has employed an unusual simile in this *kundli*.¹ He has compared man to a black bull, which, according to Indian tradition, is refractory and stubborn. Were he to realize his origin, he would give up carnal desires and try to reach his Home.

Jug jug dekho khet mein

For ages the black bull hath been harnessed
in the field.

The black bull remaineth harnessed and
returneth not to his own home.

His master calleth him, but he turneth not
to see the master.

So foolish is he, that he bringeth not
knowledge to his mind.

Were he to turn to the skies, he would
reach his original home.

Says Tulsi, "Recognize thy essence, and
know that thy ways are to be different."

For ages, indeed, the black bull hath been
continuously harnessed.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Kundli* 4, p 34)

¹A type of Indian poetry in which part of the first line is repeated in the second, and the entire first line is repeated as the last line

THE WORLD A WAREHOUSE

Once again, Tulsi Sahib has used the analogy of a bull to describe the world. Kal, the Negative Power, loads the twofold sack filled with good and bad deeds on the back of the bull, who keeps going endlessly through the maze of the eighty-four lacs of species.¹

Teen lok kothi bhai

The three worlds are the warehouse, actions
good and bad constitute its wares.
Actions good and bad are its wares, and Kal
hath made the world a bull.
He hath filled its pannier with delusion, and
pushed the beast on to the journey of the
eighty-four.
Again and again he cometh and goeth,
without salvation he remaineth ever
in suffering.
The blind are in the company of the blind,
who among them can show the way?
Through Vedas and Puranas, O Tulsi, Kal
hath spread the net of rituals.
The three worlds are the warehouse, our
actions good and bad are its wares.

(*Shabdavali* Pt 1, *Kundli* 11, p.36)

¹The eighty-four lacs (8,400,000) of species through which a soul may have to pass in the cycle of incarnation

BEHOLD THY BELOVED WITHIN

This is one of the few *ghazals*¹ written by Tulsi Sahib. It was written to explain the esoteric secrets of the spiritual path to a Muslim divine, Sheikh Taqi, who happened to pitch his tent in the neighborhood of Tulsi Sahib's residence. The Saint impresses upon Taqi to seek God within his own self and not in the world outside. Much of the mystery of the inner realms becomes resolved at the eye center, from where the aspirant commences his spiritual journey.

Sun aye Taqi

Listen, O Taqi, seek not thy Beloved in the
world outside;
Within thine own self, behold the splendor
of thy Beloved

¹A form of lyrical poetry, originating from the Persian literary tradition, which generally deals with the subject of love. Every two lines of a *ghazal* are usually complete in themselves.

In the pupil of thine eye is a mole, wherein
is hidden the entire mystery;
Peep within and behold thou what lieth
beyond this dark curtain.
The secret of the fourteen realms will, for
certain, be disclosed to thee;
Let thy attention not slip, see that thou art
ever vigilant.
Listen! Thou art constantly being called
from the Most High.

There ever beckoneth thee the voice of thy
Beloved.
It is not meeting with the Beloved that is
arduous;
What is difficult, O Taqi, is that it is hard
to behold Him.
Without the grace of some realized Guide,
says Tulsi,
The path of salvation is distant, beyond thy
reach.

(Sant Bani, p 45)

CLEANSE THY HEART'S CHAMBER

THIS is another of the *ghazals* addressed to Sheikh Taqi. It is impressed upon the Sheikh to cleanse his heart of all worldly desires before he can hope to realize God. To search for Him in mosques and temples, jungles and forests is futile.

Dil kā hujrā sāf kar

Cleanse thy heart's chamber for the Beloved
to come,

Erase the other impressions, to seat the
Mighty One.

Look with the mind's eye and behold the
beauteous mart;

What enchanting scenes are there to captivate
thy heart!

One heart, with desires many, and avarice
still increasing,

Where then is room enough for my Lord's
seating?

What a woe! What ignorance! That the
 dweller of the natural mosque
 Should come to grief in temples artificial
 and mosques full of fraud.
 Listen with attention in the real Ka'aba's
 arch,
 A Voice from the Highest beckons thee to
 march.
 Seekest thou the Lord in wilderness in vain;
 The path of the Beloved lies through the
 Royal Vein ¹
 Seek the perfect Master with love and
 patience, dear;
 He, indeed, will give thee light to find the
 *Shah Rug*¹ clear
 The practice of a few days will open the
 inner ear,
 And the Way to Allah the Great will be
 clear.
 "Put thy heart to practice," this is Tulsi's
 call;
 'Kun'² refers to Allah, the High, the All in
 All.

(*Sant Bani*, p 44)

¹*Shah Rug*, literally 'royal vein', but this does not refer to a vein in the physical body, it is the central current or canal in the finer body, which is located and traversed by means of spiritual practice according to the instructions of a true Master

²*Kun* is mentioned in the Koran and means the same as Word or Shabd

KEEP THY GAZE ON THY MASTER

This is the last of the *ghazals* selected for this collection. Tulsi Sahib emphasizes the role of the Master in traversing the inner journey. With his presence and help, all obstacles on the way are removed.

Are aye Taqi takte raho

Listen, O Taqi, keep thy gaze fixed on thy
Master who hath offered thee his hand.

Leave it not through negligence, if thou
desirest to see the splendor of thy
Beloved.

His grace will lead thee to His very
presence, without any fear or danger
on the way.

Go thou straight to thy destination, for the
Master hath given thee his charter.

Mansur, Sarmad, Bu Ali Shams¹ and
Maulana² came;

With strong resolve they reached their goal,
through this very path.

Arduous is the way to the destination of
love, but reaching there is not difficult;

The one who resolves difficulties is with thee
and hath given thee his hand.

Says Tulsi: Listen, O Taqi the inner secret
is quite different;

Keep it safe in thy heart, for it points to the
Most High.

(*Sant Bani*, p 45)

¹Shams-i-Tabriz

²Maulana Rum

PERSECUTION OF SAINTS

This piece is an extract from *Ghat Ramayan* and is in the form of a dialogue. Mana, a disciple of Tulsi Sahib, had hurled abuses and insults on his Master before he came to the path. However, afterwards, when he was initiated and blessed with spiritual experience, he realized his folly and sought forgiveness of Tulsi Sahib. The Master, in his reply, brings out the fact that such has ever been the fate of Saints; they have always suffered persecution at the hands of the world. But they never nurse a grudge against anyone and are ever forgiving, for they know that people's behavior is the result of their ignorance.

Hum augun kahi kar kar bhākhā

Mānā:

Much slander did I pour on you,
But you, O Master, did not take it to heart.
The spoilt son showers abuses on his father,
But the father overlooks the failings of
his son;

He gives him sweets and lovingly explains,
He continues to own him and guide him to
righteousness.

Likewise, for my misdemeanor you readily
forgave me,
Though I thoroughly misbehaved towards
you, O my Master.

Tulsi Sahib:

Give your thought over such behavior, O
Mānā.

This has been the fate of Saints at all times.
The tussle between them and the world is
perennial.

Saints guide the world towards deliverance,
And the world hastens to persecute the
Saints.

They lead people onto the path of God,
But, in return, people pay them back in
slander.

The Saints shower benefaction on man,
But the ignorant recipient gives them pain.

Let me explain this to you through an
example:

When a child suffers the discomfort of a
boil,

His mother wishes him to recover speedily,
The boil suppurates and the child is in
agony,

The mother tries to squeeze it for relief.

The child starts to beat his mother in anger,
For he thinks she is causing the hurt which
pains him.

The mother desires the child to be well,
Then alone would she have peace of mind.
The mother acts for the child's well-being,
But the child can comprehend it not.

The ways of the world are like the child's
understanding;

The mother's concern is like that of the
Saints.

They give the world cure for pain and
suffering,

The world retaliates by inflicting pain on
them.

Such has been the way of the world since
long;

You have not done anything strange,
O Mānā.

(*Ghat Ramayan* Pt II, p 49)

WASTE NOT HUMAN BIRTH

This and the following two poems, bring out the special significance of human birth, which should not be wasted in worldly pursuits. For it is only in the human form that a soul can obtain release from the cycle of birth and death and meet the Lord.

1. Dhari nar deh jagat mein

Thou hast been given the form of man, but
thou hast reaped no benefit.
Thou hast not known thy self and thou hast
gathered conceit in thy mind.
Thou hast taken deep roots in this gross
world, birth after birth.
Worthless are thy wealth, mansion, gold and
silver;
Thou hast amassed and accumulated much
in this world,
But a day will come when all thy possessions
will perish.
With such a rare incarnation thou hast
become swollen-headed;
After a while thou shalt be called to face
justice.
Body, mind and wealth will be of no avail,
They are all empty and hollow like leather
bellows.
Leave the changing colors of this petty
world, says Tulsi;
The Lord's Name alone is the true wealth.

(*Shabdavali Pt II, Sorath 1, p.87*)

2. *Tero jag jeevan birthā re*

Futile hath been thy life in this world,
what hast thou gained from this
birth?

Thou hast endeavored to seek God in
wasteful acts of delusion; never didst
thou utter the Name of the Lord.

Thy heartless actions have cast thee away
from Him, and in this world thou
drinkest poison

Leaving good deeds aside, thou pursuest evil
and throwest the blame on destiny.

Never didst thou put thy heart in satsang;
evil didst thou perpetrate in the company
of the evil

In the waves of thy mind thou indulged in
frivolity; love thou never didst think
about

Involved in worldly pleasures, thy malady
and suffering were aggravated,

And thou didst not attain thy destination.

Thou hast turned a deaf ear to the Master's
words,

And thy heart, O Tulsi, hath been rendered
dead.

(*Shabdavali Pt II Sorath 2, p.87*)

3. *Nar dhari deh kusal kaha keenhi*

Having attained the human form, what good
have you done in life?

You have not dyed yourself with the company
of Saints;

Instead you have attached yourself to the
evil mind.

All the eight watches you are under the sway
of your passions,

Age after age your attention has been focused
on their gratification.

Never did you fix your hopes and aspirations
on a perfect Master;

You tasted the pleasures of lower senses
and carnal desires,

You did not taste the elixir of transcendental
bliss.

You wasted the golden opportunity of the
human form, O Tulsi:

The poison of sensual pleasures you drank;
the ultimate mystery you unraveled not.

(Shabdavali Pt. I, Chitavani 33, p.131)

FROM RUST TO GOLD

The central idea of this excerpt from *Ghat Ramayan* is the transformation of the disciple from a depraved to an exalted state. Before he comes into contact with his Master, a disciple is full of vicious thoughts and evil passions. In the company of his Master, he imbibes the qualities of the Master and reaches great heights.

Tulsi main ati neech nikammā

I was ignoble and worthless, says Tulsi;
I did not comprehend the Truth and was
forlorn.

Crooked, cruel, and full of evil thoughts
was I;
True surrender to my Master alone has
saved me.

My shortcomings I revealed to my Master,
And I did so without reservation.

I told him the tale of my faults and
failings,
For there was none other as sinful as
I was.

My compassionate Master, full of mercy
to the wretched,
Overlooked all my failings and really forgave
me.

Pure-hearted is my Master, the bestower
of bliss;
He has taken hold of my hand, he has
redeemed me.

How to count his virtues and realize his
reach?¹
Bereft of understanding, I can know him
not.

Seeing Tulsi writhe and groan in poignant
pain,
He released this wretch from intense
suffering.

Even if I were given a million
tongues,
I would still not be able to describe
his grace.

Gifts from even millions of Kalpa trees²
Would not match the blessings of my
Master.

¹Here Tulsi Sahib refers to the Master's reach in the inner higher regions

²A mythical tree in heaven which, according to Hindu mythology, fulfills all wishes

The resplendent dust of his lotus feet
Is the purest of all things in the three
worlds.

How can I aptly describe his splendor
and grandeur?

Even the Vedas cannot fathom the majesty
of Saints.

The ten incarnations¹ and the three gods²
Could not unravel the mystery of Saints.

How far can I describe the unique state
of Saints?

I have not the reach, nor the capacity
to know them.

If I were to look for the best in the three
worlds,
I would still fail to find his parallel,
O Tulsi.

Intellect cannot convey the greatness
of my Master;
From where can I bring forth a testimony
to prove it?

How am I to eulogize the qualities
of Saints?
Wherever I look, I find none their peer.

¹According to Hindu mythology, there are ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu

²Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh—the creator, preserver, and destroyer respectively

My mind was depraved and mean,
it was filled with poison;
By good fortune it has come in contact
with the Master.

Defiled by my actions, steeped in sense
pleasures,
It has taken refuge at the feet of my
Master.

My understanding was poor, my mind
was reckless,
It was deeply steeped in the venom
of passions.

How far can I enumerate its faults?
There is no end.
With a touch of the Master's feet it has
turned lustrous.

By a glimpse of the Master, my karmas
were wiped out;
The fruit of my actions, good or bad,
was annihilated.

He has cleansed me, the ocean of mercy
that he is,
Even as the ocean absorbs and purifies
a rivulet.

The dust of his feet is luminous, the deeds
of Tulsi are dark;
He has elevated this wretch to the Lord's
supreme Abode.

(Ghat Ramayan Pt I, p 71)

WHY DIDST THOU ABANDON ME?

In the metaphor of a stormy sea, Tulsi Sahib describes the condition of this world. Only a spiritual adept, as a friendly boatman, can lead one safely across the turbulent ocean.

Sun sun sakhi sujān

Listen, O my good confidante, how shall
I attain His knowledge?
The world is unfathomable, its other side
is invisible; how shall I ever cross?
Even as the wave of the ocean is full
of fury,
Even as the water of the river is never
at rest,
Such, verily, is the flow of the world;
I know not its depth, nor its shores.
How should I cross this turbulent ocean?
For I find none to accompany me
Is there no friendly boatman to ferry me
across?
Is there none to reveal the secret of my
Beloved's abode?

I long to see the minaret of His palace,
And I yearn to have my say to Him.

“Why didst Thou abandon me in alien
lands?”

Will be the strain of my complaint.

My Beloved is astute and all-knowing,

He will realize my state;

He will give me the boon, O Tulsi, of
union everlasting.

(Shabdavali Pt. I, Mangal, p.87)

THE INNER EXPERIENCE

Only the inner experience of withdrawing the soul current from the body leads to the realization that the soul inhabits the body. Such a one will experience the soul's journey through the Sukhmana¹ and the Sunn².

Bhagi surati ghat mahin

That the soul resides in the body is known
only to the one who has experienced it
within.

Who has adorned his chamber of Sukhmana
and fixed his attention on the Sunn,
Who has himself seen the reflection in the
mirror within, alone values this truth;
Even as the oyster pining for the drop,³
O Tulsī, knows its worth indeed.

(*Shabdavali* Pt 1, *Kakahra* 22, p 25)

¹*Sukhmana* or *Shushumna* is the central current or canal in the finer body which is located beyond the eye center and traversed by means of spiritual practice according to the instructions of a true Master

²The third spiritual region in the journey of the soul

³It is believed in Indian folklore that it is only a raindrop falling into the mouth of an oyster that develops into a pearl. Thus the oyster is supposed to be pining for the raindrop

SOUL AT THE EYE CENTER

It is by concentration of the soul at the eye center that the veil of delusion can be pierced. The pre-conditions for such concentration are purity of mind and a keen desire to attain the Lord.

Chhin chhin suriti sanwār

Moment by moment gather thy soul and
hold it at the eye center.
Cleanse thou the mirror of thy mind and
catch the Divine Melody with thy soul;
If thy longing is keen, thou shalt pierce
the veil and attain the quintessence.
Indeed, O Tulsi, thou shalt then behold the
radiant dust¹ of the lotus feet of thy
Master.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Kakahra* 7, p 25)

¹The reference is to the light emanating from the radiant form of the Master

THE INVERTED WELL

This poem describes the inner spiritual experience which comes after crossing the eye center. It is reminiscent of a similar poem by Paltu, who also compares the human head to an inverted well.

Lakṣī akāś oundhā kuā

I beheld in the firmament an inverted well,
and was filled with the resplendence of the
light within.

In the resplendence of brilliant light, I had a
glimpse within the flame;

All was suffused with brightness, and I had
a peep into my self.

The path leading to the shores of
Mansarovar¹ was revealed unto me.

In the Sukhmana I went into a trance and
then crossed to the other side.

Whosoever hath thus experienced, O Tulsi,
hath got the pledge of union from the
Lord.

I beheld in the firmament an inverted well,
and was filled with resplendence of light
within.

(*Shabdavali* Pt. I, *Kundh* 16, p.38)

¹A lake in the third spiritual region, a dip in which makes the soul absolutely pure

CAST AWAY THY VEIL

The soul and the Lord are of one essence. It is the sense of separation which stands in between the two.

Lāj kahā kijae re

Why dost thou feel shy? Oh cast away thy
veil.

Thou hast been given this wondrous
form,

From continuous shyness hast thou come to
grief;

Let the One sitting behind the veil behold
thee.

The Lord knoweth all that thou concealest
within,

And the people, in vain, move to and fro
in agitation.

He who hath adorned thee with a beauteous
body and mind,

The same One, O Tulsī, is thy Master and
thy Lord.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Tappa* 36, p 14)

LONGING TO RETURN

This poem employs a typically Indian example to convey its theme. In the old Indian tradition, a bride comes to her parents' house after staying with her husband for some time. She returns to her husband when a palanquin is sent to her with a message to come back. In this poem the parents' home signifies this world and the husband denotes the Supreme Lord.

Main satguru ki dāsi

I am a slave of my Master, who is a
 denizen of the Abode Eternal.
My husband hath sent me to my parents'
 home,
For I had lived for a long time with him.
I am now weary of this atmosphere,
And day and night I remain dejected.
Love for father, mother, brother and sister
Hath become a noose of attachment.
I have become tied to this deluded affection,
Constant stay with them hath vitiated my
 reason.
Now there is no peace in my mind
And I ever long to be near my beloved.
Send a messenger with a palanquin, I pray,
That I may return Home with much joy.
Sayeth Tulsi, the loved one in separation
Is pining for her Eternal Lord.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Latka* 5, p 106)

PAIN OF LOVE

This is a description of the pangs of love which the disciple feels in separation from his Master, a malady which can be cured only by one physician, his Master.

Byākul bireh diwani

I am restless; mad in love, I pine for my
beloved.

A stream of tears constantly flows from my
eyes,

Every moment the pain of love throbs in my
heart,

And I have lost awareness of my very
existence.

My body has been denuded of sentience
and sensibility,
And I am oblivious to all my surroundings.
I am impervious to the varied currents,¹
And my mind is now dead.
The physician knows not my malady,
Of what avail are his remedies?
My wound is deep inside the heart,
How shall I describe my pain to him?
The Master physician alone knows my
agony,
And he has the 'herb' to cure me of my
ailment.
My malady only he knows
Who suffers from it, O Tulsi;
And he alone feels this pain
Who goes through its pangs.

(*Shabdavali* Pt II, *Latka* 6, p.107)

¹Various passions and desires

DANCE OF THE SOUL

This poem is an *Ulatmasi*, which conveys its contents in a paradoxical form. The *Ulatmasi* given below purports to describe the inner experience of the soul during its spiritual journey.

Jal bich nāchat Rambhā

Within water dances Rambha;¹ listen,
O friend, to this marvel.

The music of lute, conch and tambourine
emanates with sweet melody in varied
waves.

She dances to their tune, as the snake
dances to the bagpipe, and puts to
shame gods and goddesses.

¹Name of a mythological nymph, here she signifies the soul

The moon shines, without clouds there is
lightning and ambrosia flows incessantly.
The wall is of water, water is in the wall,
and the pillar of the mansion is of air.
Even as the alal bird¹ ever flies to the
skies, she rises and dances in ecstasy.
In that realm exists neither the earth, nor
the sky;
That void, without support and perimeter,
is enchanting and peerless.
Night nor day, day nor night is there,
In what manner can I ever describe it?
Who reverses and sets right her path,
O Tulsi,
Such a one takes no time to attain the
heights.

(*Shabdavali* Pt. I. *Ulatmasi* 4, p.137)

¹A mythological bird which is said to lay its eggs in midair, the eggs hatch before they reach the earth and the offspring immediately fly back to their mother.

THE RAINY SEASON

The rainy season is specially chosen by Saints and poets in India for poems of love and longing. In this poem, Tulsi Sahib has compared streams and rivers overflowing with water to the lover's eyes brimming with tears of yearning for union with the Beloved.

Jin piya kee birhā basae

In whom longing for the Beloved hath
 taken abode,
Every moment his body becometh feeble and
 enervated.
A stream of tears constantly flows from his
 eyes;
The pangs of pain ceaselessly smart his body
 and mind.

Like rivers in Sawan and Bhadon,¹
 overflows the stream of my love.
Day and night I long for Him and tears
 fall like incessant rain.

¹The months of the rainy season, which usually tally with July and August

The pain for my Beloved increasingly
penetrates my being every moment;
My attention can be transfixed on nought
but him
Even as the moon bird¹ never gets satiated
by looking at the moon.

Dark clouds gather and burst with thunder,
and lightning dazzles the eyes.
The peacock crows in delight
and the rain bird² sings in longing.
I yearn for thee ever more, my body keeps
wasting away in anguish.

When I listen to the Sound, I lose my
patience and I write to my Beloved.
With mind and soul as my couriers, I send
my message to His inaccessible abode.

When I hear the tidings of His well-being,
My heart is filled with love and delight.
Ever since this yearning for the Lord has
taken hold of me,
I have severed all connections with the
world.

(*Shabdavalī* Pt I, *Sawan*, p 91)

¹The *chakor*, a bird in Indian folklore, is enamored of the moon

²The *papiha*, another bird in Indian folklore, drinks only rain water
and that too only at a particular time of the year

ONE WHO GOES WITHIN

The state of a person who traverses the spiritual regions within himself has been described in this poem. Such spiritual experience comes only through the guidance of a Master, and it gives the individual deliverance from all anguish.

Hiye nain nagar nabh pāvae

Who have seen within, the splendor of the
celestial region with their inner eye, they
alone can show the beginning of the
beginning

Who have found the secret of the supreme
state, only they give us hints of that
state.

Who have merged their souls in Shabd have realized the truth of what the Master hath said.

Who have penetrated the current of spiritual regions above, they alone know the state of the Inaccessible.

Varied aspects of the mystery and the secret of the Unspoken Word are unravelled by them.

Who have brought faith and have learned this truth, they alone can look for the Lord.

With the grace of the Master all afflictions go, and he gives deliverance from the anguish of this world and the hereafter.

Only a rare holy one, who hath surrendered himself to a Saint, realizes the Primeval Being.

Who hath played this game at the peak of the firmament,

He alone, O Tulsi, hath quenched his thirst for this world.

(Shabdavali Pt. II, Holi 20, p.28)

WORD—TRANSCENDENT AND LETTERED

In the following four poems, Tulsi Sahib distinguishes between the primal Word and the word contained in language. Much of the confusion in understanding the true import of 'Word' arises from the failure to make this distinction. The primal Word is creative; indeed, it is the ultimate Reality. The lettered word is merely descriptive, and so can be written, read or spoken. Swami Ji calls the transcendent Word 'dhunātmik' and the lettered word 'varnātmik'.

1. Shabd shabd sab kahat hai

Word, Word, sayeth everyone, but that Word
is found beyond Sunn;¹
That Word is beyond Sunn, that alone is called
True Word.
Beyond the western gate,² and beyond that,
and even beyond abideth Word;
Within the two-petalled lotus,³ and within that,
and from far within cometh Word.

¹See footnote 2, p 83

²The inner eye has been described as the 'western gate' by some Saints 'East' presumably is all that which lies in front of the physical eyes, 'west', in contrast, is all that is opposite of the visible, that which lies behind the physical eyes

³A region in the inner spiritual journey of the soul. Here the disciple's soul meets the radiant form of the Master, and the Word becomes both audible and visible

That which the Saints have revealed within,
that alone is True Word.
Proclaims Tulsi from Satlok: What I say is a
unique secret,
For Word, Word, sayeth everyone, but that
Word is found beyond Sunn.

(*Shabdavali Pt. I, Kundli 20, p.39*)

2. *Shabd shabd sab kahen*

Word, Word, say all; listen from where it
comes.
True Word is transcendent, it is unstruck
melody.
From the city of Sunn emanates the primal
sound;
Indeed, O Tulsi, the unstruck music arises even
from beyond Sunn.

(*Shabdavali Pt I, Arill 8, p 30*)

3. *Nirsabdi bin sabd*

The unstruck Word is not the word which can
be written or read;
That which can be written or read, 'lettered'
it may be called.
The word which all mankind speaks can be
rendered into letters;
O Tulsi, the unlettered Word is indeed tran-
scendent known only through hints given
by Saints.

(*Shabdavali Pt I, Arill 9, p 30*)

4. Nihacchar pad par

The unlettered Word is transcendent; the
lettered word comes in creation.
The same word is Kal, who has spread his
net in the world;
The Vedas, describing it as 'not this,
not this', call it Brahm.
Indeed, O Tulsi, different is the path
of Saints, and none other than Saints
knows it.

(Shabdavalī Pt. I, Arīl 10, p 30)

THE WEALTH OF SHABD

Tulsi Sahib pleads with people engrossed in worldly desires to ascend to the blissful spiritual regions within through contact with the Word. He compares the Word to a wealthy merchant who will shower great riches on one who cares to come to him.

Koi hansā bhavan sidhāro re

Listen, O swan, ascend to thy true abode!
So says the Master again and again.
Thou dost not listen or pay heed to his words;
Oh, finish thy sorrows and joys and thy trans-
migration.
If thy deluded soul were to unite with her
source,
Never again would she have the bondage of
body and mind.
From the source of the ocean opens a window
of light;
Oh, awaken that resplendent light within thee.
The rich merchant, the Word, has given the
demand draft;
Remove the hasp, open the door and cash the
amount with joy.
Says Tulsi the slave, reside within thine own
home,
Repeat the name of the Lord and secure Him.

(Shabdavalī Pt II, Holī Deepchandi 8, p 44)

WITHOUT THE MERCIFUL MASTER

If we do not find a perfect Master, we keep tossing about in the ocean of physical existence aeon after aeon. We keep stumbling in the darkness of ignorance, without a support. Only the living Master of the time has the key to the light of Truth.

1. *Satgur deen dayāl bin*

Without the merciful Master, aeon after aeon
we rove;

Aeon after aeon we rove, and suffer the kicks
of death.

Stupid as we are, still we accompany the
courier of death;

Despite hearing scriptures, wittingly we ruin
our lives.

Smritis, shastras and vedas have all emanated
from Kal:

Without the Saints, O Tulsi, we are tossed
about endlessly;

Without the merciful Master, aeon after aeon
we rove.

(*Shabdavali* Pt. I, *Kundli* 1, p.33)

2. *Sant kee rāh ghar agam ke pār hai*

The path leading to the abode of Saints
is beyond the inaccessible;
It has a unique truth which the world
knows not.
Through arrogance of mind one sees not
the Lord,
Nor does he accept with humility the Saint
and the Sadh.¹
Such will be seized by the angel of death
and yoked in chains;
Those without a Master will be thrown
into the limbo of hell.
Says Tulsī: Kal does not and cannot harm
devotees in the service of the Master.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Rekhta* 24, p 15)

¹'Sadh' is a devotee who has attained the region of Trikutī or the Universal Mind

THE DELIGHTS OF INNER EXPERIENCE

Those who get connected with the Word revel in the spiritual regions. They unravel the inner mysteries; they come to know the true import of the scriptures, understanding their mystic significance and transcending the level of ritualism and external observances; they delight in the company of the Lord, as a happily married woman with her spouse. It is given only to the brave to die while living—to withdraw the soul current from the body to the third eye and receive the enlightenment of spiritual experience.

1. Shabd surat jin ki mili

Whose soul is attached to the Word, revels
ever in cosmic flight;
Revels ever in cosmic flight, and realizing the
Lord, plays with Him.
The mystery of the inaccessible and the secret
of the scriptures he unravels.
He reaches his Home within and its essence
he comes to know;
In the lotus feet of the Beloved he sees
his true destination.
The happily married woman rejoices with her
Spouse every moment, O Tulsi,
For her soul is attached to the Word, and
revels ever in cosmic flight.

(*Shabdavali* Pt 1, *Kundli* 21, p 39)

2. *Agam ki jot mein*

In the lamp of the inaccessible he keeps
 beholding a flood of light;
It is given only to the valiant to receive
 this radiance.
He alone sees the Beloved with his own eyes,
 O friend,
Who brings his soul to the banks of the
 Sukhman.¹
There he looks at the moon and the sun,
 right in his presence,
His mind gets tamed by music divine and
 he abides ever in the region invisible.
Says Tulsī the slave, in the service of
 the Saints
He brings forth news from the palace beyond.

(*Shabdavali* Pt I, *Rekhta* 2, p 6)

3. *Paith man paith*

Plunge thou, oh plunge in the ocean of
 thy self:
See tortoise in the lotus, lotus in the
 ship;²
Behold this in thy body and listen to
 the tumult
That emanates from the waves of unstruck
 melody.

¹The central path leading from the third eye to the higher regions

²This is an allegoric reference to an inner realization

At the peak of the firmament revel with
thy soul;
Pierce through the eye¹ and ascend to thy
Home.
Says Tulsi the slave, at the western
door of thy body
The Lord adorns the beauteous throne
of His palace.

(Shabdavali Pt 1, Rekhta 4, p.7)

¹The third eye, the single eye

WITHIN THE FIRMAMENT

When the spiritual practitioner begins to withdraw his soul current from his body through meditation, he experiences flashes of light within. This experience is not only blissful, but also leads to release from the cycle of birth and death. The technique of such spiritual practice is obtained from a perfect Master, without whose help it would be impossible to attain that stage.

Gagan mandal ke beech mein

In the region of the firmament, glitter flashes
of light;

Glitter flashes of light, which the rare brave
one beholds.

He searches for Reality and escapes the agony
of the eighty-four:

He meets the compassionate Master and
knows the secret from him;

He serves the Saint, who gives him news of the
palace above.

O Tulsi, vacate thy body and meet the perfect
Master;

In the region of the firmament glitter flashes
of light.

(*Shabdavalī Pt I, Kundhī 15, p 37*)

LANE OF LOVE

The path of love is narrow, it is difficult to tread; but once it has been followed, the abode of the Lord is not far. With its culmination, the ultimate goal of life is realized. All this, of course, is possible only through the help and guidance of the Master, who is compassion personified.

Agam gali gam

Tread the inaccessible lane, climb up yonder
and behold the Essence;
Then shalt thou ascertain the words of thy
Master with thine own eyes.
Go to the palace of thy Master within and
there serve Him with devotion;¹
This human birth of thine will attain
then the quintessence of life.
Reach the house of Sukhman and await
there the arrival of the Lord;
Take refuge with the Saints and knock out
the teeth of the angel of death.²
Fie on the world without the Lord! All love
other than for Him is adulterous.

¹The reference is to the two-petalled lotus in the inner regions where the disciple first meets the Master in His radiant form. Serving Him with devotion implies constant contemplation on that form.

²A colloquial expression for completely overpowering the enemy.

Fie on life without the company of the Beloved!
What can one say of such a life?
The perfect Master is the embodiment of compassion;
He cuts asunder the net of the angel of death,
He takes thee across the stormy ocean and
bestows on thee a place of great honor.
Make thy soul familiar with the path within;
Thou shalt then attain to thy beloved Lord.
Proclaims Tulsi, I have solved the mystery
of ultimate knowledge and now I sing His
praises.

(Shabdavali Pt 1, Mangal 2, p 87)

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